THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SALVATION

ANNO MMXXV

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Utinam appenderentur peccata mea quibus iram merui, et calamitas quam patior, in statera!

Quasi arena maris haec gravior appareret; unde et verba mea dolore sunt plena:

Quia sagittae Domini in me sunt, quarum indignatio ebibit spiritum meum; et terrores Domini militant contra me.

Book the First

I

All philosophy is a search for the *unum in quo totum continetur*. Throughout the history of human thought this impulse has taken on and been known by a myriad of names: Schopenhauer's *"will"*, Kant's *"noumena"*, Plato's *"ideas"*, and, most generally— the word *"God"*. What has "God" meant? Either too many things or nothing at all. Often, nothing more than an abstraction, a focal point, a fancy of expression. Other times, not too infrequently, "God" has meant something far more sinister: the total destruction of natural laws, the overpower of will, the control over the whole material universe. What remains true, however, is that the God of the philosophers is not that of the poets, and is in fact far closer to that of the people— though far sicker, far more unnatural. It takes a certain degree of sick logic to assume the existence of a God whose existence entails the baseline of the world. In the end, despite the hate which the *ancilla theologiae* held towards mysticism, it cannot be denied that the latter instituted the former's ideals in their truest form. The sufferings of St. John are merely the result of the logic of the theologians — what they undertook with the pen he undertook with the dagger of his heart — his blood has

the divine love for God to bless or blame. But perhaps no Saint of any kind formulated this ideal, this twisted ideal, better than the "pagan" Saint Plotinus through *"The One"*. What is this wish for God? Has it not been the wish for this "One"? And what is this wish for "The One"? Has it not been the wish for control over the entire material and spiritual universe, in the same way a child plays with his clock to change time? The wish for total power by returning to the womb? "The narrow path"? "The center"? Oh sancta stultitia! But what am I even talking about? Was this not meant to be an essay on Shestov? And salvation? What *is* salvation? *Τι εστίν σωτηρία;* I promise, my friends, it will all make sense very shortly…

II

Who is Lev Shestov? I believe I had not heard his name, save for a brief mention in Camus' ghastly *Myth of Sisyphus*, before I stumbled upon his great work: *The Good in the Teachings of Nietzsche and Tolstoy*. I distinctly recall that fateful day of winter where I, by most fanciful whim, decided to find parallels in the thought of Nietzsche and Tolstoy. Whether this was part of a project of thought or not I forgot later, for what I found perplexed me, stunned me, sucked me in from the first few lines, bringing my heart to its realms of profoundest doubt— in short, I forgot about

everything. I was struck with a deep sense of gravity unlike few times before, and I saw here an attempt, above all, to understand myself. This nonsensical suffering; where does it come from? I am not speaking of suffering in general, but of this specific, nonsensical suffering. Tolstoy and Nietzsche had wondered the same, they had *experienced* the same— hallelujah, I am not insane! But the way out? There was no way out. They began preaching, teaching, manufacturing doctrines— but it all left them unsatisfied, it all left them back where they had begun, only worse, as a man who descends from the heights of intoxication. And so all their toils were failures, all their efforts wasted, all their works *in vain*. Terrible, terrible thought! But it gave me some comfort, for this meant that I was not wrong in rejecting all these toils, that I, indeed, needed something *more.* But enough about myself! What nonsense, really. Was this not supposed to be a study in rhetoric? Well then, let us first, in order to study rhetoric, get rid of it all together!

III

Well, did these men achieve something, or was it all truly just in vain? About Nietzsche I am not sure, but Tolstoy's inner life torments me to this day. The impossibility of man to change his fate — what fate? — that of the soul. Throughout his *Good in the*

Teachings of Nietzsche and Tolstoy Shestov presents us with a picture of men totally abandoned by all human solace, all human hope, all human striving at all. The second part, *Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche: Philosophy of Tragedy* expands on the theme, rooting it significantly more in the works of Dostoyevsky — though he is not omitted from the first part — discussing a lot, but reaching pretty much the same conclusions. And, so, Shestov ends the second work thus, with a quote from Baudelaire: *Aimes tu les damnes? Dis-moi, connais-tu l'irrémissible?* Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Nietzsche: these are all condemned men, men cast out from all the safety nets of mankind— *cast out from mankind*. This meant not only being cast out from mankind materially, socially— but from the category of "man" as a whole, spiritually. Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky: those horrible names which re-echo as a humdrum in the darkened rooms of the spirit— they were no longer men. This meant that their moral orientation was no longer obvious, their North Star no more shining, and, worst of all, the laws of the spirit which the philosophers had so carefully crafted, or tried to keep in check, were now *gone*. And where did this leave them? At the only logical endpoint— at the furthest limits of the universe, at the fringes of spirit— not only beyond man and time, but, worst of all, beyond causality. A suffering *without* causality. Can there be anything more horrible than this? Can there be such a thing as this

at all? And yet to have those horrible words *"Ding an Sich"* still mercilessly trample upon you, to submit to a law in a place where there are no laws— is this not an atmosphere too cold for a human being to be in and still remain— a *man?*

IV

This, at any rate, is the way in which Shestov chooses to present them to us. These great men, admired by everyone, venerated by all— reduced to shambles? To a crying, sniffling, weakly ecstasy of sickness? Truly, this is a great feat of literary mastery, this is, dare I say, *the best psychological novel of the 20th century.* Whether the inner world of Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy truly resembled what Shestov described of it is truly up for the heartiest of debate, and something I will return to at one point or other. Whether it is true or not is not as relevant to our current examination, however. What matters is the craft; that Shestov, with whatever material he worked with, managed to convey such stunning feats of literary rhetoric. So, let us celebrate then— and why not in song, in lyric, in some merry little verse? A little song for Shestov, perhaps? Well then…

V Song in Praise of Shestov

With fiery word of tongue thou re-soundest

Loud, roaring as a beast upon thine heights

Those heights, wholly thy own, thou foundest,

And madest a monument of thine rights.

Wherefore await the praise and blame of men?

Thou hidest deep in despair's blackest night;

The time is out of joint? I say: "away with it then!"

Earth orbits not the sun: "a dreadful sight!"

"Wherefore now cakes and pamphlets— rest, when?"

So says the heavy spirit, with no delight;

Who would like to live here but a man of pen?

Thou lookest up, thou seest thus set aright—

A castle in the heavens, on despair's heights.

VI

Lev Shestov is a hypocrite: there is no way around it. Let us go back to *The Good in The Teachings of Nietzsche and Tolstoy*— every chapter, every page, every blot of ink in this *libellum* is

dedicated to destroying the idea of a "teaching", and of exposing the futility of preaching to save a man's soul. But let us then look at the final line of this book (mind you, of *this* book, not the *Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche*): "We need to seek something higher than the good, we need to seek God"— Remarkable words! The end of one preaching just turns out to be the beginning of another. I felt this in my bones the first time I read it, but the cleverness of seduction can lure all the other organs to simply ignore this sensation. *I gave him the benefit of the doubt*. Oh, and what a terrible doubt! That such a critique was grounded on such a paradoxical, new affirmation, so vague, so dark, so indefinitely *murky*— is sinister. What was Shestov trying to achieve here, what sleight of hand did he pull? What ideal was he trying to sneak in here? But oh, I'm getting ahead of myself. The answer to this question is not quite clear in the books following *Nietzsche and Tolstoy.* His *Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky* continues this mining, under-mining of psychology. The underground man is exalted to the heights of genius, and, as he will later tell us in his life, Dostoyevsky possessed a *second sight*— a *religious* statement. But for the time being, neither his *Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky* nor his *Apotheosis of Groundlessness* make any of the imminent *positive* philosophy of Shestov any clearer. His final word, or, rather, *penultimate word*, is that unanswered questions and mysterious

sufferings lie dormant in the bosom of mankind, a problem which philosophers, seemingly, ignore. Suffering is the penultimate word— the penultimate word before what? Before the ultimate word*:* God.

VII

Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky as sick men. A seemingly unresolvable sickness as proof of a mysterious suffering. A seemingly mysterious suffering as a proof of areas of life hitherto ignored by philosophers: a perfect, untouched ground for discovering new phenomena! Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky as *proof*— of what? There are areas of life where time is out of joint, where there is effect without cause; this much has already been established. What we are left with, essentially, is a void; and out of this void Shestov will erect a monument so high, so stunningly penetrating, *floating in thin air*, that we cannot help but sense that he feels some *pride* (whether it is *false pride* or not I dare not say) at his creation, to the point that we feel that this insignificant writer may at any moment burst into laughter and song, repeating the immortal lines of Horace: *"Exegi monumentum aere perennius regalique situ pyramidum altius*"— and he does.

VIII

It is not until Shestov's *Potestas Clavium* that the philosopher's conviction appears on the scene. Yes, previously we had the word "God". But did not Tolstoy also call his highest ideal "God"? Nonetheless, this was rejected by Shestov as merely a hiding place for something different, for "the good", which Tolstoy essentially agreed with. This "good" which, in Shestov's eyes, was merely a trap for men— a deaf, blind and dumb system which merely commanded without offering any options— a mechanical creation. It is evident that there are as many "Gods" as there are people. "God" means the highest ideal, but what this highest ideal is to each person is a completely different question, and an obscure, dangerous question, thick as the jungle at night. So what did Shestov *mean* by God? It was not an abstract ideal such as "the good", nor was it any form of Spinozian pantheism or Hegelian world spirit. Shestov tells us that a true philosophy of religion must be brought back to The Eternal Book; just as Luther said, just as Luther *did*. It is clear that this is not a question of dogma, for the spiritual tensions we frightfully witness on the page are not the commonplace compromises of an accountant who was to submit to his authority— but of deep, private desire. Yet, just as every claim *ad fontes* is essentially an impulse towards re-interpretation, it is obvious that we cannot merely take Shestov's description of God at face value. He defines God as boundless freedom, but that

should mean very little when his, apparent, enemy, Hegel, could have used the very same words to describe *his* world spirit. In this case, however, Shestov's attempt at re-capturing the Biblical God, the so-called *living God* and *not* the abstract God of the philosophers, seems to be, though not without its nuances, fairly accurate.

IX

But God *for what?* God *for whom?* If we have established that the God of every man, philosopher and beast is the making of his own interpretation, the making of his own fancy, must we not, first, ground our principles in the man making the interpretation, and, most importantly, *in his will*? Kant, Spinoza, Hegel— all these wrote seemingly without a will, but behind every prejudice which comes with philosophy, such as assuming the existence of the *I* that *thinks*, or of the *cause* with *effect*, *or* of the *reality* which is *intelligible*, the fundamental instinct, the fundamental desire and will of the philosopher becomes apparent. Hegel's *was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig* is nothing but desire fulfilled. So, what is the will of *Monsieur Chestov?* I am afraid we are going to have to embark on a little expedition, a little boat-adventure or fishing excursion of the spirit, though, in truth, I care very little for any form of abstract psychologizing, any form of speculative

Geistwurst— I care for what is visible, provable— that is perhaps my little vice, the little prejudice of this writer— I shall thus keep strictly to the fact, the deed, the *word*, despite Faust's heartiest wishes. For, truth be told, in the realm of literature — or by its more popular name: spirit— one can hardly speak of any deeds.

X

"The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, not fear before Nothingness. And freedom comes to man not from knowledge but from faith, which puts an end to all our fears." — "Nothingness? What does he mean by this?" Oh, please be patient my reader, all things have their due time. Right now, I would like you to turn your attention to the latter half of the sentence: *freedom comes… from faith*. Remarkable words! And he continues: *which puts an end to all our fears*. Oh good heavens, stunning! He has found it! The philosopher's stone! The potion of eternal youth! The *unum in quo totum continetur*. Is this beginning to make more sense now? I hope so— *not* out of a fear of obscurity, but because I hope for intelligent readers. Nonetheless, clarity will come, but, for now, let us please *appreciate* these magnificent words. In truth, one could contemplate the words, have one's eyes rove over the page back and forth for an eternity and a day; so rich, so delicately precise they seem, so striking… But let us not be lulled into wistful sleep

by mere seductions, let us use our sharp eye, some may even say our *evil eye*. Despite all the high-flown religious language which has been bestowed upon the word *"faith",* there is very little to suggest that anyone really meant anything more than a rhetorical gesture, exaggerated metaphor, as any lover is bound to do when writing his first, admittedly embarrassing, volume of poetry. With *faith* what is most often meant is not much more than *trust. "I trust you" "I have faith in you"*— these tropes have been used quite interchangeably, even to the point of substituting faith in God with "trust" in God. Once again, it is very important to emphasize that whatever emanates from God can be traced back to the specific definition of said word. When faith in God is equal to trust in God, God himself is nothing more than a watchful guardian, equivalent to that great goddess *Providentia.* A God responds to the specific instincts of a person in a time or a place, to their *needs* (an important word which I will come back to later), this is why the pagan Gods afford such a greater level of clarity than the Abrahamic, for, wherein different needs were answered by different Gods, now everything is instilled into one, confusing mess, bafflingly named "God". Perhaps it was much more simple to be honest then; each God answered a category of instinct, and reflected it in its most crystalized, pure form— now, lacking this

clarity, all is confused, and thus psychology was invented. But I digress.

XI

Providentia: providence. What most men want out of God is the assurance of providence, which is almost always equal to the bestowing of material needs. This is how all religion has worked— pray and hope for the best. Faith, trust, hope— all means of calming the nerves. Nothing more, nothing less. "Give us our daily bread" they exclaim, and then go back to working— it's not that the prayer will give them daily bread, but, perhaps, it will make it easier: *just for good measure*, have faith. You do your work, and you have patience for things to hopefully get better, but you do your work nonetheless. If faith were anything more than this, it would mean that every prayer would be a call for *Providentia* to reach down from heaven and fulfill your whim with the turn of her hand. Whether this does or does not happen, I do not know, but I do know that the instances in which a person does pray like this, are rare. Faith for the most part is patience and calm, a way of shutting off thoughts while you do your work. This is quotidian religion, i.e. most of religion. But what Shestov, and, consequently, we, are interested in here is not this quotidian optimism, but a faith which ends *all* our fears. That is, we do not fear to walk and fall

off a cliff. Even the most faithful person will deny such a sick and demented act, perhaps answering you with the Savior's "thou shalt not tempt The Lord thy God". But Shestov speaks of freedom, of *boundless freedom*, of an end to *all* fears— is it not obvious? *A faith which moves mountains*— not metaphorical mountains, as the philosophers and even the poets are wont to say, but *actual* mountains. The prophet tells us that we shall not tempt the lord, but he also tells us that we can acquire a faith which moves mountains— how are these reconciled? Shestov does not make this clear— in fact, he makes nothing clear at all, repeating Pascal's: "*qu'on ne nous reproche donc plus le manque de clarté, puisque nous en faisons profession."* Clarity, logic, has been wholesale rejected; there must be something higher than reason, something higher than the good, which, as he so often tells us, is nothing more than the universal law which binds men and is stupid, deaf and dumb. So, a mover who moves *even the laws of the universe*. This is the God of Shestov, the boundless freedom which he says philosophers often speak of, but end up trading with the eternal law of causality and arithmetic. Is two times two able to equal five? In the hands of mere men, of mere reason— no. But in the hands of a being *above* reason? *Above* the natural laws themselves? Definitely. But then the question remains: does this being listen to the cries and wails of man? Does this being break

all morality and law to answer his will? Listen to Job— listen to the cries of the man most deserted, most abandoned by necessity. *"I am loathsome to my own family"* exclaims the poor man: sick, degraded, disgusting, naught but a pile of dust. This man— might he be no better than dead? How could such a man be counted among the living again? How could such a man *be* a man again? There is no point in crying— and, what is more, he has no *right* to cry. He can just take the consequences of his unknown sin: lie down, and die. Reason is silent, it offers no answer— an echo in the abyss.

XII

And, yet, the cries of Job *were* answered. The whirlwind is made manifest, the old God of the ancient Hebrews is made once again into matter as the ancient tyrant of the heavenly lightning. Job gets his divine tribunal. This is the proof which Shestov gives us of his "faith". *"The Book of Job, in which "cries" triumph over "thinking,"* So, Job is right, for God tells Job that he spoke most honestly of him. But let us be very clear in what way God praises Job's *sermo*: in his calling him a *tyrant*. God *does* descend as Job wants, to stand before the divine tribunal, to have his say before it, but this is only after Job himself was chosen as a cruel experiment of God, when the divine tribunal had *already* laid its eyes upon

him. And does God not tell Job of the bounds of the earth, and the stars singing in joy? What does Job know of all this? What does Job know of anything? Job cannot know God's divine plans. This much is evident. And what is Job's answer? *"I spoke once, but I have no answer— twice, but I will not say more".* In the end, Job is a moral story. Trust God's plan, for you will never know it. There is very little here of moving mountains, Shestov's anti-moral, anti-nomian "faith" comes crashing down, reduced, once again, to the submission to law. Whether this law and law-giver is more or less *benevolent* and *arbitrary* (voluntary) or not is hardly relevant. Some terribly misguided scholars of Shestov have pointed out that he would praise God even if he were a tyrant— this is false. Shestov makes it clear over and over again that philosophy's end goal must be for man to reach God, so as to, once again, acquire that primordial, boundless freedom. *"Before the face of the Creator there revives in man the authentic freedom created by God, that freedom which is boundless possibility limited by nothing - like the freedom of God Himself."* Boundless freedom, unbound by law or tyranny, a God which answers the cries of men. Whether this is the explicit God of the Bible or not is not too relevant—it must certainly be admitted that it is far *truer* to the spirit of the Abrahamic faith. God as savior— that is the whole ordeal. Whereas the savior in this case is not much more than a metaphor

for the patient faith we have spoken of, a mere psychotherapy for a people too easily upset by nervous stimuli, Shestov takes this and elevates it to its most absurd, absolute heights. God as savior, God as boundless freedom. *God as caprice.*

XIII

Seneca tells us "*ipse omnium conditur et rector…semper paret, semel jussit."* The creator of all commanded once and obeys forever. In the end, not even God himself, the creator of the heavens and the earth, the father of the morning and evening star, is free from subjugation to the merciless yoke of the laws of nature and arithmetic— in short, of reason. What does this mean? God is no longer free, reason is above God. God is no longer living, God is dead. What can he do now that even his will is subjugated to the mechanical iron law of mathematics? Nothing. The sensation of the void between God as ἄπειρον and God as *semper paret* has never been more obvious. The boundless freedom of which Shestov spoke of, which was promised by the prophet, that faith which could *move mountains*— is dead, killed by the hands of reason, or, what the Stoics more accurately call: *necessity*. What is this necessity? It means that there are ungovernable laws by which all things in the world act. That the trees move in the wind as they do now in this exact moment, that my fingers are moving over this

plane of plastic and steel in this exact way; all of this is the result of an endless chain of cause and effect, mechanical and determined as clock-work. This is the meaning of *semper paret*. All things happen in accordance with necessity, and necessity, more than reason, is what has created this frightful, unbreakable, monstrous world-order. Reason can do nothing but submit to necessity; reason, with its impotence at opposing it. So, it is not reason which the philosophers submit to when they subjugate themselves to the mechanical, but to necessity, reason is merely the tool through which they subjugate themselves. Thus reason, impotent, maybe even indifferent to what it subjugates itself to — for all it can do is bow down, whether it is a rational or irrational world-order does not matter — cannot move one finger to upset this world-order— what is more, it does not even occur to it. And, yet, there occurs to a man, not infrequently, the thought that maybe this world-order is indeed frightful, monstrous and terrible. Wherefrom may this thought have sprung, then? Is not man a part of this mechanical world-order? And, if he were, would not the thought of rebellion not only seem absurd— but impossible? Yet man does, often, stick out his tongue at the world, he does *rebel*. Mutiny… does this not point to a will, however impotent, which is free from this supposed "moral world-order"? From the seduction of the laws of nature and

necessity which no being, apparently, is free from? Does it not point to man coming… *from a higher origin?*

XIV

Man is not free— reason tells him so, because necessity demands it. The only thing in man which points beyond necessity is his cries. Thus, man's cries, irrationality and madness are the only ways in which man may be made free. Only crying is divine, all else is subjugation to necessity. I believe you are now beginning to see what I am getting at, with what eloquent syllogism Shestov turns us around to bless, not reason, but unreason. The only hope, the last bastion of salvation for man and his freedom lies in time breaking, as it were, out of joint. Of a force which upsets, or, at the very least, works against the world-order. *"All must be made insane"*— thus cries the typical Romantic (for Shestov was intimately related to him). Indeed, all must be made insane. The only enemy, the only hope for opposition which can be found against the world-order is what those who laud necessity hate— if they hated nothing their praise would have needed no saying, for all would have already been perfect. And what *do* these lovers of necessity, the Stoics, hate? Cries and wailing, madness, *unsinn*. Perfect, so there is still a part of this world that is free from necessity, even if only in thought. Man imagines the hope of

freedom, of moving mountains. The only argument which the philosophers have against this is the whole world as proof: torture, starvation, blood. *"Those who deny a contingent being are to be exposed to torture until they concede that it is possible not to be tortured."* How terrible! How *inhumane*! A world-order which is not well adjusted to man— could this be? Thus, Shestov puts forward his greatest weapon: *"When God created man, He said to him that the whole world was his."* The prophet says that sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; the world was made for Man, and not Man for the world. There is something in man that longs elsewhere… *therefore* reason must be wrong, and "man" must be right; *man, the measure of all things…*

XV

"Mangum miraculum est homo" exclaimed someone once— I do not remember who. And, indeed, man is a great miracle, a creature deserving of the highest admiration. This was the ideal of the Greeks, this was the ideal of the men of the Renaissance— those great men of immortal, passionate ambition. They could have exclaimed with Protagoras *"man is the measure of all things"* and been wholly justified in doing so. The right of man as the inalienable first principle of humanity— this is humanism, a humanism which *exalts* and wants man to *become exalted*, a

humanism which, in truth, is totally contrary to the humanism of our day, which only seeks to diminish man. Yet, both of these ideological enemies could be very comfortable using the same name, even exclaiming simultaneously *"man is the measure of all things"* and feel two completely different things thereby. Thus, let us not be fooled when Shestov praises man and his "rights", his right to "cry" as man's ultimate triumph over necessity, over the laws of nature and arithmetic, which, ultimately, shall render him and his cries *"the measure of all things"*. Humanism— this can mean a million things. A million to the power of a million. What differentiates the humanism of our egalitarian era from that of a Pico or Borgia is the *type* of man which is praised. Is it the lower, or the higher type which is praised here? This same question could be posed, and positively *should* be posed, without the slightest bit of malice, here, too. Which type of man does Shestov praise? Who are his heroes? He does not hide this— it is the sickest of people, the most downtrodden, the most broken by existence. He praises the sick man, the man outside of nature, the man *hateful* of nature and hateful *to* nature. This— is not man. This is an abortion, not in the way a man without an arm is no longer a man, for clearly he is, but in the way in which the most leprosy ridden creature, barely human, longing for death, is no longer alive, but dead. Shestov cries: *"what do we do with the dead?"*, and, indeed, what do we do

with the dead? This is his fundamental question, which he will make ever more clear as his words increasingly grow in intensity, in power, in force, in vehemence. What can we do to escape this dead universe? Shestov, at first reluctantly, but finally in joyful exclamation gives us, merrily, his answer: *"only death and the madness of death can wake man from the nightmare of life." Practice death*. *μελέτη θανάτου.* Well then… Glory to the living God of the dead! In death lie the deepest mysteries, in suffering lies the *penultimate word*, in the man hateful of nature lies— *the divine*…

Book the Second

I

There is nothing in this world that can satisfy your needs, your worries, that may justify your despair: no tribunal to which to submit, no hope for higher aspiration— nothing, nothing at all, but an incentive to be fully, and thoroughly, dragged down. *You are dust, and to dust you shall return*. Thus spoke The Lord to fallen man, thus speak the fallen lords to the fallen men; there is nothing new under the sun. The sun of this earth merely scorches the ground and the dry, beaten heads of its subjected cattle, the eternal slaves of the land. There is nothing new under the sun: You are dust, and to dust you shall return. The fate of mankind was sealed from the very moment man was banished from paradise, when the knowledge of good and evil became manifest, became the new ruler over man… There is nothing new under the sun— but only under this sun. Indeed, man, as the Divine Plato tells us, has forgotten his beginnings; after the knowledge of good and evil paradise became but a faded dream, scarcely to be recalled with any great seriousness: the kingdom of The Lord— only as promise. *Ανάμνησις, μελέτη θανάτου*— these are synonymous, to repeat them is ultimately only a tautology. Remembrance of things past is the

practice of going beyond one's current life, of going beyond life itself, of practicing death… to reach the *ριζώματα πάντων* means to go beyond the point at which man became so inexplicably cut off from them— and does this not also mean going before the time at which The Lord declared his fateful malediction upon man? To go before the time that man ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil— t*o go beyond good and evil?* But at this point I am afraid these words are but all too familiar…

II

Beyond good and evil: this is, of course, the famous formula of Nietzsche's: "…"beyond good and evil." There can be no doubt: to Nietzsche was revealed a great truth, a truth hidden in the words of the gospel which we did, indeed, recognize but never dared to introduce into our 'philosophical' conception of the world." But where did Nietzsche get this insight from? To even his most avid readers, the words "practice death" and "beyond good and evil" would have seemed mutually contradictory, paradoxical; and yet they rhyme. And there is yet another instance, obscure, often forgotten, in which this same insight, this same "great truth" was formulated: *pereat mundus… fiam!* Let the world perish, let myself remain. Such extreme heights of egoism seem scarcely to come from a place of good will or healthy imagination— even less

reason. Such words are not those of a functioning, conscientious mind, but of a form of madman or demented satyr on the heights of some devilish circus. One can almost *see* the horns grow out from the forehead of the man who dared utter such indecent words. "But what about ethics, authority and decency?"— it seems to us that the author of the formulae "beyond good and evil" and "pereat mundus, fiam" could not have any other response to such a sentiment but contemptuous laughter. And yet, laughter was never the only response. Words so upsetting to any moral authority, to all forms of church dogma, each type of institutional law historical or present, could not have been uttered so simply, so plainly, and so laconically without first having had a self-conscious awareness of their profound gravity. Nietzsche was far from a satyr of the Grecian lands, even less a born God of Olympus; he was a man of the Romantic Europe, through and through, nourished in the cradle of the most civilized, mild and mannered culture which had ever been witnessed by the earth. Even less were the solemn protestant hymns and the words *"Frau"* and *"Herr"* far from ever having touched the tip of his tongue; he had known them from childhood on, gone to church, read with young and fervent heart the words "thou shalt not kill", diligently placed his books and done his work to secure a nice position at the university of Basel— he even acquired a role in the center of the cultural *milieu* of his time.

Having carried his books with the young, bright-eyed gayness of the conscientious German scholar, he found himself at the most wonderful opportunity of his life: before the face of the unanimously considered restorer of German culture, Richard Wagner. Nietzsche, only as a young man, had joyfully tasted and suckled upon each of the sweet fruits of romantic, Christian Germany with gratitude, with thankfulness. At the time, one could have hardly found a greater model for the ideal German romantic scholar or young man; Nietzsche was worthy of the greatest respect and admiration, he was an ideal. But this time, though fruitful and motherly as a man's youth should be, did not last into the eternity promised by the sun glimmering in the sea. Already with the publishing of *The Birth of Tragedy* the coldness of the line separating man from man began to slither itself around the knee of the young Nietzsche as a suffocating snake, and the great, warm love with which his scholarly work had been received began to fade into slight indifference. He had been rewarded for his slavery, and done it diligently; but the words of his heart were not welcomed by all. Nonetheless, Wagner remained, but this friendship, as everything else, was not bound to last long into time, either. Slowly, all which had previously been his, was fading away from his grasp; first gradually, then absolutely. Despite having done all his work right, despite having fulfilled every command

which had been set upon him by the new revolutionary age, his eyes were downcast, he himself was cast out, and the hopes which he had so cherished in his heart became rotten disillusionment: Wagner as the savior of German high culture— in vain! Nietzsche at the center of this with the Great Wagner— a *could have been*. The coldness of the line separating man and man which once was but a vain thought had never seemed so apparent, so terribly conspicuous, and an atmosphere of coldness the likes of which had not been experienced by the young man before overtook him with a vehemence which made of his fate a fact— he had once been a seemingly perfect child of his age, now he was cast out from all men and would have to pay dearly for it.

III

But, then again, how did this mild, perfectly German philology professor become such a terrible demonic figure that would be able to utter the words, without the slightest of scruple, *"pereat mundus, fiam!"* ? It seems to us that such a monstrous transformation must be more than mere linear development — there is nothing linear about this — and must have, indeed, hid some secret or other mysterious, obscure thought. Well then, are we to find the *real Nietzsche?* Will he tell us? Could he show us the way? At this point I must stop, and admit that the labyrinthian search through a

person's thought (for I do not dare say soul) is as difficult and potentially dangerous of a task as that of making one's way through the labyrinth— *without Ariadne's thread*. The minotaur is close at hand; after all, we only have two eyes at the front and none in the back. Who could guide us and serve us as an extra pair of eyes, becoming our Virgil through this dark abyss? I think the answer is quite obvious, and much knowledge of literature is not needed to understand that we must turn our eyes upward towards our primary task: at this point, we need Shestov himself as a guide. Indeed, Shestov himself had echoed that terrible formula of Nietzsche's *"pereat mundus, fiam!"*— what does he tell us about it? When did such dark and daemonic words creep into the mind of our dear professor? As we have already made clear, those words — and Nietzche must have been perfectly aware of this — are naught but another formulation of that very same formula expressed in the infamous words *"beyond good and evil",* and Nietzsche, deserted by all commonplace consolations of his day — Christianity, the *Reich*, morality, Wagnerism — was not a man of the *Gemeinschaft*, even less of "the world", but rather outside of it; by all intents and purposes he was a fallen man. *"Beyond good and evil"* Shestov tells us, was a great truth *hidden in the words of the gospel*. It is hardly believable, and quite remarkable indeed, that the utterances of this broken little professor could strive towards — and even less

reach — such heights; yet his tongue did not falter, and managed to utter this new *great truth*. But I must ask again— from where could such convictions have been born? From the experience of failure and exile of the young professor? Let us assume that this may be the case— what then? Nietzsche, the young prodigy, did not manage to keep up the show of his talents until his mature years, and was, thus, worse than condemned by the world; he was forgotten. Isolated from the company and gaze of all men he could not be considered a man any longer, just as an arm cut off from the body cannot be considered "alive". The entire living tribunal of the earth laid its judgement upon him and he was cast out, not only from his time, but from all eternity, for let us not forget that the word of men has *orbem et urbem* the right of universal morality, and to traverse it means to wrong the commandments of eternity. For Nietzsche what was left was a choice: surrender to your failure or die. These were the words whispered by the divine tribunal of morality; these have been the words which had been upheld by the judgement of several millennia— and who was Nietzsche to withstand that? Or, to say it in the language of The Eternal Book: *ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ τίς δύναται σταθῆναι;*

IV

But Nietzsche did not choose death, nor did he choose resignation. He chose life— life at any price? *"Let the world perish, let me remain!"* All the eternal words of the institutions, all the eternal truths which had so enchanted the minds of men had now to move into a secondary position for the rights of the man to assert themselves. So, *"beyond good and evil"*, essentially, the same as *"beyond man and time"*. Nietzsche was fatefully, cruelly cast out from the world, and so he claimed the right to his life by asserting himself *beyond it.* But, and I must ask *again*, where did this conviction come from? Why did he not choose death? Why not resignation? Why life, why life at all? As Nietzsche himself taught us, *Was fällt, das soll man auch noch stossen; that which is falling must be pushed further. All from today falls— I want to push it further!*" Was not Nietzsche, too, one of those who falls? One of those who *decays,* a victim of decadence, a component *of* decadence? Indeed, as Nietzsche himself boldly told us later— he was the decadent *par excellence*. Nietzsche the savior, Nietzsche the prophet, Nietzsche the *Overman*— how much art of *naïveté* is still not in these words! Nietzsche was a fallen man, he was a *falling* man— let us not be mistaken on this point. The half-blind, physical cripple of a professor, who spent days in fits of nausea and migraines was breaking apart, as a decaying corpse, he was falling apart physically— he was being crushed alive by his very

own body, but he persisted. Despite the number of pages which are, rightfully, dedicated to the problem of the body, its climate and its diet, there seems to us that there is something more missing, a problem which invaded him, creeping up as an enemy in the night, to strike the final blow on the migraine infested corpse:— this enemy was *pity*. Pity! Well my friends, this "pity" is not something to be taken trivially— God himself died of it! — And mankind too dies by its pity. How, then, can a man which is already forsaken and broken by all his organs, a less-than-a-man-man, withstand what not even a God can tolerate? The thought of resistance is futile, it is an absurd impossibility to endure under a weight which crushes even the pyramids, which kills even the Immortals themselves… One thing becomes clear above all else: either man goes, or pity does. Pity for one's self, pity *towards* one's self— have you not understood, my friends? — *Where are the greatest dangers? — in pity!* And let us be very clear on this point: man's spirit does not die by physical blows — even slaves endure everything — nor does it die by mere "regrets", by mere "pangs of conscience"— these are all dangers, to be sure, poisons to the living being— but they are not the final word of death! Pity, pity my friends! This is what has resigned man! A man's spirit is not crushed by *anything in this world*, except by the knife of his own hand. — *Suicide* occurs first in the heart and then in the flesh—

and this first suicide is an admission of defeat, a great *rejection* of one’s self, a great *resignation* of one’s self. By pity man gives up his own forces, *he gives up his own self*…

V

To explain what had happened in the soul of this man it would almost be necessary to give a short explanation of the idea of "pity", or rather of the instinct which presupposes said idea, said *"virtue"*. — Pity in man, as in animals (for man is an animal) is at its most basic level a cry of necessity, an instinct for preservation. A creature overtaken by pity at the sight of suffering is compelled by an upshot of two feelings: a) one of sympathetic suffering with the sufferer, *Mitleiden* and b) one of "love". Both of these feelings compel the spectator to help the sufferer, to escape his own psychologically multiplied suffering on the one hand, and to *enjoy* his feeling of love for the victim. Pity is an instinct for preservation, it is the cry of necessity to keep alive what is dying. But this last feeling, that of the *enjoyment* in pity, is the most human, the most domesticated kind— also the most dangerous. Through this "love" an instinct of purely animal conservation becomes de-naturalized, it becomes *"spiritualized"*. The hopelessness, the admission of defeat that comes with the sympathetic instinct *divorced* from its mere quality as an incentive

to act, to help, becomes a stimulant to the mere *contemplation* of suffering and impotence. The people, with their empty inner life and positive *need* for stimulation, use this feeling as a stimulant to heighten their *nerves* and sate their small appetites— the spectacle of pity offers entertainment, in that it gives the feeling that they are still capable of*"love"... "Wehe allen Liebenden, die nicht noch eine Höhe haben, welche über ihrem Mitleiden ist!"* — pity brings small satisfaction to the poor in spirit, and this they think great, and christened with the highest virtue; as "selflessness", as "devotion"! *Nothing* could be less selfless than the positive *exploitation* of the sufferer for the sake of one's *own pleasure*, the pleasure of *feeling something*. For this self-satisfaction pity becomes unnaturally contagious and lays itself a thousand-fold upon the sufferer; after a while *he begins to take pity on himself*— and then the tragedy is at an end! The de-naturalized pity, the pity which is manufactured and *transmitted* for the sake of having an "emotional experience", *encourages* the resignation of man's abilities and makes *illusory* hopeless situations out of manageable circumstances— *in order that the feeling of pity may keep itself alive.* The animal in nature, overtaken by suffering in a very real and hopeless situation, feels self-pity as an incentive to cry for help— but man, finding himself in the hands of the unnatural parasitism of human sympathy, gives up his own abilities out of

pure fantasy, and begins to cry— to no-one! He may also simply begin pitying himself to feel more *lovable* before himself; in both cases pity becomes addictive even at the price of creating imaginary sufferings. And with imaginary sufferings come imaginary solutions: the "sin" gets its "repentance", the "bad conscience" gets its "God"… Man, the strangest animal, is attacked by problems unknown to any other creature— he feels sick at his own existence, the mere thought of it eats up his brain as a tumor. He, the most botched, the most unnatural creature, knows sufferings that often take place solely within himself, which can only be overcome *by* himself… When he cries alone, he denies his instincts, he denies his possibility of life…

VI

Out of this tempting encouragement to pity, to call for help, in circumstances *devoid* of external calamities and thus *devoid* of external helping hands, imaginary saviors are invented… I need not say more. These "saviors" are often spiritual, like ghosts, they are "blessedness", they are "salvation" itself, they are man's human, wholly human *consolation.* This resignation (to not use its more accurate term: suicide) is, and continues to be, the *highest* virtue in the society of men: wherever there are many, consolation is highly valued. And what a consolation! The mere hope of

salvation, the impotent *adoration* of the savior, the moral ecstasy and emotional satisfaction of the pitied and resigned man— this is enough to make life *bearable*! Germany, the whole of *Old Europe*, continues to suckle on the teat of this great consoling mother, and every great artist has nourished himself on it, found his rest in it. Even at the time of institutional decay, the feeling of pity is itself stronger than ever, its *need* is so strong it needs to take only new forms. This was already apparent in the time of Nietzsche, in which the German spirit had its *Aufklärung,* in which the entire spirit of its ancient *passion* were rekindled in the fire of the opera, the libretto, the epic poem, and with it all the old *barbarisms* of the German spirit. Pity… is a barbarism, and it overtook the entirety of late European cultural feeling as a storm. Richard Wagner — the great Richard Wagner! — succumbed to it himself, and so did everyone else. But Nietzsche, the creature most broken, most in need of pity, *rejected it!* To society this must have seemed criminal, *or worse— impious*. Nietzsche, condemned by the forces of nature, and now by the forces of spirit! Nietzsche, the eternally *condemned* man, the bearer of the *irrémissible* which Baudelaire spoke of and which Shestov echoed… Hence, the formula *"beyond good and evil"*, and hence, too, the line *"Where are the greatest dangers? — in pity!"*. But why this conviction? Why this rejection of consolation? Why this self-condemnation? It seems once again

that the affective causes of Nietzsche's long drawn-out spiritual suffering are as interwoven vines crawling up a tree trunk, disappearing in the darkness of the night. If there is anything which psychology has taught us it is that psychology is false— great pathologies do not spring out of *causa prima*, but often out of several, incoherent, and wholly arbitrary — contingent — "causes". In general, one cannot speak of "causes" as much as of "accidents". What befell Nietzsche, then, was not the cross of a divine mission, nor the singular "experience" which changed his eyes to the world, but the total arbitrary mix of the most *untimely* of instincts, of the most unfortunate instincts… He himself often tells us of his "untimeliness" of his *"posthumous birth"*, and even of the decaying ages such as his own being ultimately overcome by the most untimely drives, justifying them, sanctifying them as great… But let us not forget that in any event every untimeliness is ultimately tragic in its beginning, and does not sweep the battlefield of modernity as a lion emerging on a mountaintop, but often appears to the far greater and thus far *stronger* many as a thorn in the flesh… The lot which befell Nietzsche was not voluntary: his skepticism, his pride, as any man of character knows (and only men of character know) are allotted to one's nature as much as a head of hair or kind of nose… one is always born condemned. Whatever Nietzsche's decision, it was not "chosen", it

was at most fought for, and anything else would not be choice, but defeat.

VII

For this inquiry a letter to Franz Overbeck dated to the 25th of December 1882 will be of the highest of value: in it we find Nietzsche lamenting the past months of his life, Leipzig, all the *could have beens.* It takes place right after his intellectual friends, Paul Rée and Lou Salome, deserted him— in part due to Nietzsche's own sister, in part for ambiguous reasons. There has been a lot of idle talk about Nietzsche's love for Salome, but whether this did indeed occur or not is hardly relevant as it is not mentioned again in his works. Nietzsche was deserted, and this he did not forgive out of pride— what need is there of speculation on heartbreak from a man who wrote the lines *"one sooner forgives one's enemies than one's friends"*! He is conscious of his direction, of his self-imposed exile, but he is nonetheless, seemingly irrationally, persistent in it. Lamenting his solitude he describes the torment of this self-imposed exile, of living "on one's own fat" and crushed under the wheels of one's *own* affects… Nietzsche suffered most of all from the echoes created by the silence of his very own solitude, by that terrible solitude in which one's own terrible instincts grow like plants in the darkness… Ultimately,

suffering cannot be reduced to mere external circumstances, but the "vices" which one harbors involuntarily within one's own nature. Nietzsche could have wavered, he could have "forgiven" his friends, he could have taken the position a Leipzig, he could have given in to resignation and been consoled by the moral conscience of society— but in the silence of solitude in the dead of night the voices of *midnight* speak to one, the terrible and yet irresistible words of the subterranean instincts, of the graves of the dead opened up… Indeed, it is burdensome, it is torture, in it one finds little more than chaos and destruction, where no man would dare to go, even less understand the seduction to, and yet there is this unexplainable urge to push forward through it. Nietzsche listened to the whispers of the night which drew him further and further away from the consolations of the modern day… it was the whispers of his own blood, of his own "fat"— and he nourished himself on them, eating himself up, breaking himself, pushing his downward fall… *that which is falling, must be pushed further*... and he *did* push himself further— it was not life at any price, but life the only way he could live it, trading the mere life of the world for the true life of himself — *"pereat mundus: fiam!"* — for Nietzsche *could not* live any other way, every consolation to him was *equally* as tormenting— and he did not know why! "I have killed the law— and yet I am not above it, but the lowest of

them!": how many times he must have cried this lamentation, thinking himself merely *criminal*! Indeed, he *was* a criminal, and the judgment of men, the judgment of eternity had already cast him out— there was nothing left for him but to embrace it. But a *mere* criminal, undignified, *the lowest of men*! There had to be a justification for his actions, he could not live as an *inferior man*— his pride, rightfully, demanded it so! Thus, there came the time to justify his great vice, his great crime— *not* before "mankind", but before himself, that he would be able to bear himself, *live* with himself…

VIII

If we were to roughly characterize some of the afflictions which tormented Nietzsche, we would get the following: skepticism, pride, sensitivity, fatality. In the first, a total instinctive *doubt* of all things, not least of one's self and one's own *thoughts*; second of all, a great *care* for one's self, reverence for one's self; third, weak *nerves*; fourth, the *unconditional* fate, the unconditional difference of gaze. Nietzsche, when laying out the different characteristics of the criminal in society, the strong man made sick, proposes a similar schema: suspicion, fear and dishonor. Nietzsche, the criminal Nietzsche, is this strong man made sick. It is not mere "skepticism" which condemns one to the "coldness", as he

describes it, of the unconditional difference of gaze, but a total instinctual will *for* one's skepticism, as a part of one's self in the same way as an arm or a leg. In general, the main characteristic of this man would be an almost pathological need for individuality, a man who feels like an animal in a cage when amongst the people. But let us still not be fooled on questions of coherence! His sensitivity, for example, is *not necessarily* an organic continuation of the other qualities described above — most prideful men are insensitive — but merely another conditional, contingent piece in the recipe of this condemned man, another element which cancels out the benefits of the others, which make them hardly tolerable. What need of a "Zarathustra" would a wholly decided, wholly prideful and scornful man have, if not for possessing an incredible sensitivity which makes every thought, every impulse *seem* all that much deeper, all that more dreary. Whatever instinct he had within his nature, there was another one to make it a hundred times more unbearable: if his *pride* demanded solitude, his *sensitivity* made the whispers of the lone night a thousand times louder. His body, his mind, his pride, his *nerves* all were out to destroy him— how could there be any hope to survive? Why would there be any hope to survive? To the men of German society, Nietzsche must have seemed not much more than dead, and he himself engaged in this active experiment towards self-destruction: hope to survive? What

foolishness! Nietzsche, the weak, the sick criminal *cannot* survive, lest a part of him is killed off, burned away on the cross of his own torment. "*That which is falling should be pushed further!"* What need is there of mere life, of the "conservation" of life! *"All from today— it falls, it decays; who wants to conserve it! But I— I want to push it further!"* Do not cling on to the anchor of mere life— it has already forsaken you! And so, Nietzsche kept on pushing, to the very end, to destroy— if there were something of value in him, it alone would remain.

IX

Revelations are not produced in an instant, but build up, though silently, for the entirety of one's life. The religious person and his equal, the Romantic, think that they *suddenly* come down from heaven as pure inspiration, as madness. Nietzsche himself used to be such a romantic, perhaps to a degree he always remained one, and wished for the Gods to grant him madness, *"that I may have the strength to believe in myself".* Indeed, revelation did strike, with Zarathustra, with the Eternal Return, but these were at most fruits of the long drawn-out struggle in the abyss. Nietzsche pushed himself, he kept on pushing himself, for the fatality which he was had already made him ripe for some destruction— any hope for the past, for the return of normality, for consolation could

only serve as an instrument of *torture* to drag on the entire process of decay, as a shackle, not as a key to freedom. *"Abandon all hope, ye who enter here"*— pity became the greatest danger, as that which would *conserve* the longest that which had to die off, as that which would keep the suffering going for as long as possible. But, and I must be very clear here, this pity was harmful first of all *to him and his type*— which could not *live* with any consolation. His fall was inevitable, unstoppable, and whoever tried to slow it down merely prolonged the torture; there was nothing left but acceleration— that which is falling *must* be pushed further, *"first principle of our humanity"*… Ultimately, he hoped, it would result in rebirth, or if he was not of any value, in death. But rebirth, just like revelation, does not happen *suddenly*, all of this builds up, or rather, wears off, for years constantly. Nietzsche does not go from a "blue eyed school boy", to use Shestov's words, in "The Birth of Tragedy" to the daemonic writer of "Zarathustra" overnight— rather, his layers peel off, slowly, uttering romantic notions of divine madness in one passage, and speaking of overcoming mankind in the next. Nietzsche pushed, he kept on pushing: did he reach an end? Could an end be reached? At this point, he had to allow someone "stronger" than him to speak — Zarathustra — : *"you shall love peace as a means to new wars"* — he had to constantly peel off, push, destroy, *ascend*, and how could there be

any end to this? *Therefore* spoke Zarathustra, for this ideal of eternal war, for this constant self-overcoming, this constant *becoming* one's self. This is the meaning of Zarathustra's Overman: a constant, never-ending striving upwards, to never *tire* of striving upwards. Indeed, he had to keep on falling, and all the same remain alive by *his* strength and *his* strength only, to test whether there was worth enough in it, or whether it was just consolation. There is no coherence, no unity, no central motivation for such actions here — what is more, there can be no talk of such things — *nor* is there a mere "irrational passion" driving him towards an end: No, there is too much blind suffering, too much sick sensitivity of body and mind, too many states of extreme suspicion where *cause and effect seem out of joint* for this terrible fatality to have occurred. It is almost mysterious, it seems almost as an accidental rendezvous of the most unlucky match of instincts and drives— it is nature, and not the mere "laws of nature", but a tragic accident of human nature specifically.

X

"Can an ass be tragic?" — Nietzsche asked once: *"To carry a burden that one can neither bear nor load off — the case of the philosopher."* The "philosopher" in question is clear enough, but let us bring our attention to the fact that Nietzsche characterizes

himself *as an ass*. Indeed, as we have previously stated, Nietzsche did not *choose* his burden, it was not something he could "load off"— it came to him mysteriously, it was born as a thorn in the flesh within him. Could it be that Nietzsche was not more than an ass, a bearer of unwanted torments, that he was not some typical "strong man" at all? There is undeniably a large part which is due to his condition, to his illness and afflictions, but his strengths, his passions should nonetheless not be discarded. It is important to keep in mind and examine the way in which strength and weakness are often so fatefully, so terribly and perplexingly intertwined in one another. It may be accurately said that beyond virtue and vice, beyond good and evil, strength and weakness inescapably hold another as the sunlit tree and its shadow. A drive may both exalt and depress, depending on its *direction*; Nietzsche's *instinctual* skepticism turned suspicion and mortal doubt is the clearest example of this. The most important thing, more than the individual elements of his personality, are the proportions and relationships between them. Nietzsche's afflictions, mastered and *"turned around"* may in fact have become his greatest strength— but his afflictions still remain a fact. There was strength in him, a certain untimely and atavistic strength which comes to overcome the age, but the way in which this strength *grows* to such heights is nonetheless in large part a product of chance. There may have

existed, and perhaps still exist, men of similar "virtues" as Nietzsche— but the deep intimacy with decadence, sickness, and the deeper understanding of the importance which the stronger instincts have within one's self— did this not come from sickness? It is possible that, if it weren't for the *extent* of the unlucky circumstances which Nietzsche found himself in, he would not have been able to understand, even less to formulate, the *extent* to which "pity" was destructive, and the *extent* to which it needed not only to be discarded, but totally annihilated. Nietzsche *was* a sick ass, as were all the men of his age, and only by the great magnitude of his burden was he able to know the danger of decadence to its utmost extreme, only by being the most thoroughly acquainted with it and its dangers was he able to overcome it by through-coming. Hence, Nietzsche's strange words *"nihilism thought through to the end"* hence, the *"great down-going"*. *Can* there be any other way for men today? Only he who suffers by every affliction can know what it is like to need to be pushed through to the very end; one sickness less in the *recipe of what one is* and one does not *know* the tensions whereby the importance of the *deed* becomes necessary— the importance of not merely *remaining* on strength, but of pushing this strength to the very end, to the death of all pity.

XI

"Ja Zarathustra, du sprichst die Wahrheit. Nach meinem Untergange verlangte ich, als ich in die Höhle wollte, und du bist der Blitz, auf den ich wartete! Siehe, was bin ich noch, seitdem du uns erscheinen bist? Der Neid auf dich ist's, der mich zerstört hat!" Thus cried the disheartened youth to Zarathustra; thus *still* cry youths today. *"Ja, in's Böse!"* he cried, for oh, that was Zarathustra's message, that was his good news! He is the lightning which spark forth from the sky to *break* all the bad things which have been kept alive in the world, he is the *λναῖος*, the freedom bringer. This is the reason Nietzsche spoke of killing what is dying, of "beyond good and evil". Let the world perish with its pity, for the thunder and joy of youths to be heard again— "*pereat mundus, fiam!"* At this point Zarathustra is the preacher to mankind, a bringer of gifts and glad tidings won after many years in the solitude of feeding "of his own fat". Hence, his sad, lonely song of the night, his solitude which shines in darkness and knows how to *give* but not receive. Zarathustra's *great discovery*, one won in years of personal, hardened, private struggle, has borne fruit and is now ready to be carried down to bring new joy to the world. But Zarathustra's message was not for mere disheartened youths, nor was his suffering merely for the masses or even for a few disciples.

It could be translated, to be sure, and watered down to some form of practical advice and incentive for the people, but the people are satisfied with very little. Zarathustra, being the generous bringer of gifts that he is, gives whatever piece of joy that can be extracted from his teaching— but those are not the men to whom he speaks, for whom he has suffered. His teaching can ultimately only be heard in the echoes and abysses of the heights, in the deep midnight, where no mere "youths" dare to tread, in the ears of those who have suffered, for those who, living in the contemporary dredges of a pity which benefits the lower as much as it harms the higher, cannot be anything but *condemned* men… But who are these condemned men? And who is Zarathustra? It is futile to speak of Nietzsche being or not being this "Zarathustra", or of the magician being "Wagner", or of trying to draw a biography of Nietzsche from out of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra". Nietzsche is in all of the characters and none at all. Zarathustra falls for melodies, for small pities, nausea, doubt… just like Nietzsche— but he tells us also that Zarathustra is "stronger". I think he is being sincere: Zarathustra is not an Overman, but he is the attempt at constant overcoming which Nietzsche tries time and time again to achieve in his writings, in his life. He is, in part, the popular preacher who speaks of "Overmen" which, as we know in our time, cannot *but* be misinterpreted by the crowd; he is also the guide to the very few, a

philosophy which can only be of use to very few people, perhaps even none at all. In both cases he serves a function, either as a gift bringer to the world that he so loathes, but wishes to see improved, or as the *necessity* of rebirth in the realm of the *condemned* men… Nietzsche called this place "the underground", as did Dostoyevsky— as did Shestov! And which men do we find in the underground? The magician, the scientist, *the ugliest man*… Shestov tells us that, like with Gogol, people misunderstood Nietzsche's ugly man as a parody of others, when he was in fact just talking about himself. This is only partly true as we do not find all of the components which constitute Nietzsche, but it is certainly, with Zarathustra, the closest prototype to Nietzsche the man. *Der hässlichste Mensch*… in this chapter, there is the key to Zarathustra…

XII

The ugliest man *murdered God*... He could not stand a God who looked into the ugliness of his soul, who saw all its depths and bottoms. God *died* of pity for man, of his infinite, insatiable ugliness. Pity itself demands that his ugliness not only be conserved, but grow to infest every living thing, so that pity may live on, and finally *murder*. A being who, even though he be an Immortal, lives on pity, cannot help but die of the ever-growing

sorrow that it brings. *"He always saw me: I wanted to take revenge on such a witness— or not live."* Thus speaks the ugliest man: how can a God bent on seeing and conserving your ugliness be tolerated? Such a God must die, otherwise life is not worth living. The ugliest man is too *rich* in the tension of the big and the terrible, he himself can only live with the hope of overcoming, he himself and his entire life acquire respectableness only within a great love: this great love is called disgust. There are hopes, there are passions, there are loves that serve as a greater stimulant to life than anything in the world— pity cancels out such hopes, it *forbids* disgust, it kills all force which enjoys its desire for overcoming… "*Auch dieser da liebte sich, wie er sich verachtete— ein großer Liebender ist er mir und ein großer Verächter. Keinen fand ich noch, der sich teifer verachtet hätte: auch Das ist Höhe. Wehe, war Der vielleicht der höhere Mensch, dessen schrei ich Hörte?Ich liebe der grossen Verachtenden. Der Mensch ist aber Etwas, das überwenden werden muss."* His higher men are not united by love, nor for the desire for safety — some even desire danger — but by *disgust.* Zarathustra says: *"Der Ekel weicht diesen höheren Menschen"* Here is the great truth which the ugliest man brings to the world (I dare not say, God forbid, *mankind*): — the ugliest man, most closely intimate with the ugliness of man, he knows how ugly man can become, how *depressed* is the great harvest of

pity— he knows the great danger therein, he knows, more than any man, the terrible importance in ridding man of his ugliness— he knows the great disgust… And this great disgust will grow as a tree towards the heavens, above all hills and mountaintops: through *disgust* man will constantly strive higher, constantly increase his field of vision, constantly expand the heights of his soul… Above all, let the men of great disgust first of all *despise* themselves, first of all have extreme hardness towards themselves, disgust towards all worthy of death within themselves— let them just keep what is higher alive, only then can man finally stand beyond the threshold of good and evil, of the "world"… only then may men become exalted. In the meantime, let them strive in their great disgust, let them live in their great disgust, for all disgust is beyond mere "hopes", it is an act of living itself… At this place, one could even say that disgust is the engine of the self-overcoming of man, of the Overman— but let us not make monoliths out of our striving, as the higher men, in their foolishness for a kingdom of heaven (all monoliths are of heaven), did when making an idol out of a Donkey. Zarathustra and the men of great disgust pointed and continue pointing the way, but not towards a goal — mankind does not strive towards a goal — but towards *further* striving— not towards the end in the heavenly spheres, but down towards the endless earth, towards eternity… Is

this not what was whispered to Zarathustra in the deep midnight? In that midnight which is at once midnight and midday, a ring of rings? Indeed— disgust is a great love, it is the instinct towards eternity…

XIII

In this great, deep midnight Zarathustra found the eternal return, and it was in this same midnight that Nietzsche found the echoes of his solitude "nourished on his own fat". In the *silence* of the midnight his deepest nature whispered to him, whispered the same secret which life itself whispered into the ear of Zarathustra: *"Ich bin das, was sich immer selber überwinden muß."* through the gaping abysses of the night and the open graves of the dead all values, all deeds, all thoughts, joys and sorrows of time come up from the ground and flying into the air fall back into it again in eternal dance, in eternal movement. And all of life wants itself, *only* itself— beyond good and evil, it knows neither shame nor innocence, it is wholly innocent. Does not Zarathustra tell of love *not* of "the other" but of one's self? *Fully* of one's self? This would be the life that *cuts* into itself, the snake which bites itself, the pleasure which wants itself *eternally*, through all sorrow and all sorrow with it: that midday-midnight, that despising love, that terrible falling ascent into death, into life. The Eternal Return, and

not "will to power", is the center of all Nietzsche's philosophy. He himself did not know what to make of it in writing, how to tell it or how to explain it more than to *show* it. But through Eternal Return, as the Dionysian and Eleusinian mysteries, man dies and comes back to life only to die again, thus he constantly kills off what is dying and immortalizes himself in his constant rebirth. At this point, man is constantly becoming, coming in and out of the realm of being, of "good and evil"— he overcomes mankind.

XIV

Let us not, however, confuse this with any "practice of death"! No, three times no! This birth, this constant re-birth, is naught but the *practice of life*, of *Lust.* For this constant striving for life, for *more* life, death is but an *accident* to which pleasure, in its constant desire for itself, merely says "Yes, once more!" as a part in the constant chain of becoming. This man of constant coming, whose prototype is Dionysus, would not be a man of the kingdom of the heavens, but of the earth. How foolish it would be, then, to equate the practice of this man with that of Plato's practice of death, of "anamnesis"! What concern does this man have merely for what *has* happened, except for as a part of *all* which happens and will happen? The practice of death and anamnesis would be the absolute opposite of this: the return to the realm of mere "being",

to the kingdom of the beginning, the kingdom of God! The desire to go back to the beginning, to go back to the "roots of everything", has always been the desire, *not* for a world beyond good and evil, but for a world *before* it, a world of nothingness, or at least a world only of this "good", a world conceived out of *pity*… Out of this pity for man, this weariness, this lack of conviction in man, the entire world has been extrapolated— and continues to be extrapolated. It is not that we do not believe in paradise, but that if we were offered this paradise we would choose to *reject* it. This "paradise" in which stands the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil is not a paradise beyond good and evil, but one firmly rooted within "good and evil", only far more boring. I recall the finest chapter in Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov, where the devil in his Goethean fashion laments his eternally doing good when always willing bad, for without his mischief the world would be uninteresting. And how much truth there is in this! What would life be without laughter? Laughter is just another form of violence. When man ate from the tree of knowledge, *that* was his paradise, for only then did man have a world. What care is there for beginnings? What care can there even be for beginnings? What beginnings are there *at all?* For the man of Eternal Return there are no beginnings, just as there are no ends— man has never been "cut off" from "The Kingdom", he is

already in his Kingdom, he has always been in his Kingdom, and he rises within it as the morning sun which comes from dark mountains.

XV

"We live surrounded by an endless multitude of mysteries. But no matter how enigmatic may be the mysteries which surround being, what is most enigmatic and disturbing is that mystery in general exists and that we are somehow definitely and forever cut off from the sources and beginnings of life." Thus does Shestov open the beginning of his final work, Athens and Jerusalem. At this point it should be quite clear which type of man it is that speaks here: the man of pity— Shestov is overtaken by *pity* for man, for the "original sin", for the "fallen world". Of course, any philosophy which stands within "good and evil" cannot help but *condemn* the world and, inevitably, begin imagining worlds better than it, original worlds, "beginnings". Often not much imagination is needed as such a world *does* indeed exist in a certain form: it is called the womb. What is fascinating about the example of Shestov is that while he scribbles through decades of writings exclusively from the perspective of "good and evil", he pretends to do the opposite. Let us bring our attention back to the following citation: "Beyond good and evil." There can be no doubt: to Nietzsche was

revealed a great truth, a truth hidden in the words of the gospel which we did, indeed, recognize but never dared to introduce into our "philosophical" conception of the world." It should be clear enough that Shestov is equating the tree of knowledge of good and evil with Nietzsche's formula. Indeed, the words are undeniably identical, but what a difference there is between these two, and what trickery is hidden behind a writer which equates them! In going beyond the ideas of "good and evil", Nietzsche *embraces* both good and evil, he embraces everything. The tree of life, however, in contrast to the tree of knowledge, cancels out good and evil merely for the sake of "the good". The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the tree of *everything*, only then can good and evil be overcome, embraced. The tree of life, however, is merely the tree of "the good", the tree of pity. And is this not "the good" which Shestov precisely condemned when he uttered the words "we must seek something higher than the good: we must seek God"? Here it is once again simply a play upon words, because Shestov *worships* this good, to him "God" is simply a God which can bestow this "good". "The good" which Shestov condemned was merely that of Tolstoyan moral action, more out of an antinomianism which echoes that of the early Saint Paul than anything else— in any case, it is not the "good" of the paradisiacal moral-abortion-world which he condemns, but the poverty of the

usage of certain words serves enough as a cover for Shestov to confuse and convince the reader of two opposite propositions at the same time: that he is, on the one hand, going beyond "good and evil", and, on the other that the highest ideal is precisely a God *molded* out of this pitiful "good and evil" — and the disingenuous, uncleanly word play continues and adds up for every work. The intentional confusion of "good and evil" is merely the beginning, after that he will confuse joy and sorrow, weakness and strength, God and The Devil and everything in between— but why did he feel such a need to push the entire barrage of theological hocus-pocus upon the reader? From where did such a conviction spring? The case of Shestov is hardly particular, but the *vehemence* and cunning with which he launches his attack is not to be underestimated— perhaps not since late antiquity was a man so *hateful* of reality even *seen.* Was he not perhaps born— with a thorn in the flesh?

Book the Third

I

There is enough ground to suggest that what we call "ideas" are, at most, dulled sense stimuli. An idea composed of words is the marriage of sound registered by our ear and image based on past registers through our eyes. A connection, a parallel, a number or logical line, may correspond to the movements of our hands, or relations of physical movement. It seems that the more perfect, the more pure, the more cold and objective an idea is as it presents itself to us, the more it ceases to entice the movement of the heart, the blood, or the sense organs, but rather appeals to the most subtle discordant and concordant movements in our inner organs, processed in the brain. In any event, the coldness with which ideas are to be regarded are nonetheless never free from the movements in the physical body, and to assume that we may think outside the risk of further stimuli in a realm of pure spirit is simply absurd. We are always vulnerable to the physical affects which may be exercised on our sense organs, no matter how much we guard ourselves against it with our coldness— yet we still need to be cold. At one moment we may find ourselves in perfect contemplation of ideal relations, in the other we suddenly fall on

an image which awakens sorrow, pity or admiration, and our body is filled with the warmth of rushing blood. A book is no innocent thing, and when we think we have escaped with it into a realm of pure speculation, we may turn the page and suddenly find ourselves stabbed in the back by a totally different affect. Often these are noticeable and sudden so as to merely be discarded as the author's overt enthusiasm, but other times it builds up subtly, gradually, from one side of the spectrum of emotion to the other, and in the end the affect itself is intertwined with logic to the point of laying itself upon the whole of our physiology, to the point at which we, by prejudice of *movements* which we characterize as "line of though", assume relationships between individual affects to be *causal*, and we do not notice its effect. But this is how all rhetoric has always worked, and how all images, intertwined with often contradictory arguments, convinces us to a certain "truth", by the seeming concordance between different affects, by the superimposition of one over a totally different idea… No, a book, a speech, a polemic— is no innocent thing! Through it we may be convinced that an ant is, indeed, an elephant.

II

"Life is not literature", this does Shestov assure us in his *"Philosophy of Tragedy"*– this does he, too, assure us to be the

theme of the Dostoyevsky he is primarily concerned with: *Notes from Underground.* The story, if one can even call it such, of Dostoyevsky's novel is well known enough and we won't spend time repeating it here, but it can very well be accurately summarized in the words "life is not literature". Dostoyevsky's underground man is almost overtaken by ecstasy sublimated from despair at the thought "So this is it, contact with real life!" — "real life oppressed me with its novelty that *I could hardly breathe"*. The titular hero, when arriving at the end of his long confession, cannot help but make it clear what the main preoccupation of the so-called "literary work" is: he repeats the words "real life" three times in a single paragraph. That the "underground man" who was speaking was, in fact, Dostoyevsky is something no-one doubted, lest they were naïve enough to be fooled by the prefatory note to the *"Notes".* An entire biography of Dostoyevsky could perhaps be extracted from *"Notes from The House of The Dead"* and *"Notes from Underground"* and Shestov positively attempts to do so. He begins, rightfully so, at the theme "life is not literature", and follows Dostoyevsky through to the very end, to his confessions as a type of criminal, a scoundrel, a man divorced from real life, a man disillusioned, he follows him through all of his confessions of his "cultivation" and "refinement" as mere "literature"— and then, something incredible happens: he believes Dostoyevsky's final lie.

Dostoyevsky *could not* leave merely as a scoundrel, as a criminal — he, like Nietzsche, needed *justification* for his condition — and so he turns towards a new form of preaching. Shestov condemned the preaching of Nietzsche as this vain "justification", which as we have shown in the second part of this work, is not the whole story— *and yet* Shestov believes Dostoyevsky when he tries to exalt his "underground man" into heights of genius: what is more, Shestov expressly makes him his formula, placing *"let the world go to hell, but I should always have my tea"* with Nietzsche's *"pereat mundus, fiam!".* But what world is being destroyed? What "I" is being affirmed? Whereas Nietzsche's cry was one of the necessity for distance, Dostoyevsky's is that of the desire to become a preacher— a disillusioned dreamer who wants to *dream on*. Of course, Dostoyevsky does not turn back to the socialist fantasies of his youth, at least not explicitly, but to Slavophilia, to "Orthodox Christianity" (which paired with Slavophilia is not much different from said socialism)— he becomes the popular preacher.

III

In the essay *"Dostoyevsky: The Gift of Prophecy"* Shestov positively diagnoses Dostoyevsky's preaching as an attempt to become something which he perhaps was not— a "prophet", as

Shestov says, is a Bismarck, a chancellor, not a Dostoyevsky. Shestov considered this "preaching" to be a deviation from the true message of Dostoyevsky's works, which was found in the teaching of the "underground man", the *true* saint, the *true* religious message "at the heart" of Dostoyevsky's work beyond "popular preaching". But what was the message of the underground man? At first, it seems that it is just this formula "life is not literature", that much "literary refinement" is a *faute de mieux*, but then it seems that it is something quite different, that the "underground man" has *actually* divined something more… and thus he ends his notes, a few sentences after a three-fold condemnation of our "divorce from real life" with these words: *"We are stillborn, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living fathers, and that suits us better and better. We are developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an idea. But enough; I don't want to write more from Underground."* In general, this has been interpreted, in part correctly, by the words which precede it — *"we try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalized man"* — as a condemnation of the "generalized man" as opposed to the "individual man" of flesh and blood embodied in the hero. But the hero himself admits that we are *"developing a taste for it"* and that without books we are *"ashamed"* of being men with real flesh and blood… does this really sound any different from Dostoyevsky's

underground man? Granted, in the very same paragraph our hero takes *pride* in having gone further in his debauchery than anyone… but then why the need for all these words, for all this explanation? It is true that on the one hand Dostoyevsky elevates pathology, as he continually does throughout his *œuvre,* but on the other he constantly feels a need to *explain* it, to justify it, to make it seem *sublime*... In this sense, he tries to elevate his pathological debauchery, his impossibility at adapting to real life, into an *ideal*— an *idea.* Dostoyevsky himself *is* and *wants* to be born out of an idea, *not* out of the idea of the "generalized men", but out of an idea nonetheless. He, indeed, wants life to become literature.

IV

Mikhailovsky tells us in his *"Dostoyevsky: a cruel talent"* that the main driving force behind Dostoyevsky's work was *not* compassion or love, but the pleasure of artistically stimulating the organs, the senses of cruelty. This is, we may add, typical and indeed characteristic of the entire Romantic movement — Dostoyevsky was a Romantic — in that the mere play of all *emotion* was the primary end goal of the work. Pity and cruelty, as love and hate, are never far apart and often touch the same organs, often raise or lower the temperature of the blood in the same way. Both are barbarisms and when done "artistically" (artistically in the

lowest aesthetic sense, not on the sense of sight, sound or smell but for physical impulse, constraint of the stomach etc.) play the reader's organs of emotions as an instrument— it becomes a harmony composed of affects. The mixing of moral, religious "preaching" acquires a charm in its paradoxical mix with cruelty, but it is a charm nonetheless. Thus, Dostoyevsky, whom Turgenev called *"The Russian Marquis de Sade"*, managed to deliver a message of cruelty under the guise of moral language. None of this is new, however, and merely makes it clear for us that Dostoyevsky, above all else, is *not* to be trusted in his words and only be taken by his affects. His literature has precisely an appeal insofar as it plays on the lowest and often most hurtful pathologies of life into a coordinated, harmonious (in the sense of a harmony of chaos), *literary* way— he makes life literature. This same principle should be applied to Dostoyevsky's "underground man", who, precisely because he is portrayed as someone who "says the truth" should perhaps be trusted the *least*, as a vehicle to another wish-fulfillment, to a new lie. This lie is a "new" preaching, which, as we have previously established, is the "individual man" born out of an idea, out of literature, out of his own whim. It rhymes perfectly with what is stated in the first part of the *"Notes"* in which the author declares open war upon *the laws of nature and arithmetic*. These "laws of nature" are naught but a metaphor for

the hero’s own dreary moods and bad conscience, but the barbarian *needs* a more noble enemy to *admit* that he suffers— hence, "the laws of nature", hence also "satan". Dostoyevsky, to admit that he suffers, creates the literary device of the "laws of nature" to make his shameful and pathetic suffering seem *heroic.* If life is disappointing and embarrassing, if it is not literature, then it *should become* literature.

V

So, the preaching of the "underground man" is that of the justification of his suffering at the hands of the "laws of nature", making life into literature, into an idea— the popular preaching of Dostoyevsky is that of justification of the fate of the Russian people as messianic, as a literary phenomenon. How are these two any different? Evidently, they aren’t, they are both preachings, they are both "born out of an idea". "The laws of nature", just as the "Messianic mission of the Russian people", is based first and foremost on the *aesthetic principle*, as Dostoyevsky himself pointed out and knew while trying to dress it up as "merely what the philosophers call God." What a marvel of dialectic! What rhetorical power! Dostoyevsky, the man of the decadent age, the spiritual criminal, the dreamer, found his fulfillment in the role of the prophet, of the Russian messiah. But what made him choose

one form of preaching over another? What made him abandon the fight against "the laws of nature" for that of Slavophilia? It might not be much of a difficult question at all when taking into consideration how much better the role of the national prophet befitted him; his greatest novels, after all, are those in which national, personal forces and those of eternity seem to touch and melt into one another, where the personal sufferings of the heroes, the most downtrodden, the most base and filthy, find their redemption in the picturesque spectacle of moral subjugation. One would be hesitant to call Raskolnikov's "fall before the cross" as submission to the psychology of salvation in an absolute sense, as what we see there is not expressly a cry before God but an active, internal purging of the personality in favor of a new life in the order of the world, in its "moral order". This is why Dostoyevsky's novels have often been praised for their portrayal of "the personality" in relation to historical forces. The entire concept of redemption in Dostoyevsky is centered around the world and in the world; his novels, therefore, cannot be seen outside the political and historical context in which the author found the necessary aesthetic and pictorial material to form its most vivid, colorful portrayal of redemption. Hence, this bizarre concept of "The Russian" and his suffering in service of others. Dostoyevsky found his rest and satisfaction in the service to "the world", and thus he

found his justification in returning to mankind, though only as an aesthetic means. For Dostoyevsky this was quite enough, however— despite his novels being primarily "psychological" there is very little pictorial material in the dark labyrinth of man's mind, this is why *"Notes from Underground"* is so poor in imagistic content despite its undeniable energy. Pictorial material is ultimately found in the outside world, and for Dostoyevsky the outside world he found himself in was quite enough— but Nietzsche required more, he overcame mankind.

VI

But what *if* a world could be constructed out of the psychology of man? Shestov, it seems, attempts to do precisely this. — In *"The Good in The Teachings of Nietzsche and Tolstoy"* Shestov primarily draws a quite literary picture of the sufferings of these men through external means, through outer images and situations. However, as the second book — *"The Philosophy of Tragedy"* — gradually progresses, it draws further away from these images into the dark labyrinth of psychology. The work quite palpably begins to lose its effect, and yet the images belonging to the first part still try to be retrained, overlapped, so as to affect the reader with a certain sensation even when going through the murky, colorless and dull roads of the psyche. In the end, this is obviously not quite

enough, and so, Shestov, finding himself more and more deserted by the atmosphere of the novels, begins to construct his own environment through biblical and poetic quotations. Shestov increasingly utilizes Heine and Baudelaire— when in the essay *"Creation from Nothing"* he delves into the psychology of Chekhov losing sight of the imagery in the stories, he brings back the rhetoric through the strong affect of Baudelaire. The relative poverty of the images in these quotations is instead made up for by appealing to strong emotions, such as in the line *"Resigne-toi, mon cœur, dors ton sommeil de brute"* — undeniably a strong image, but made most effective by the blanket of *tristesse* laid on top of it. This shift in rhetoric is very important: Whereas earlier the imagery of the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky served enough as an aesthetic environment to seduce into Shestov's interpretation of respective author, now Shestov fully attempts to bring up images seemingly *out of nothing* when entering the spaces of man's psychology. And what means does he find there? Evidently, he does not find the flowers nor the moon, he barely finds anything palpable except one thing: pathologies. Despite his insistence upon *"groundlessness"* every idea, every sensation, every image grows from the ground as a tree laying its roots in the soil grows upwards. If there be any attempt at affective seduction the center of gravity must shift towards new ground, and Shestov finds its most

fertile ground, perhaps the only fertile ground in man's isolated soul, in appealing to the pathologies, the sick passions. Thus, Shestov concentrates the entire barrage of his rhetorical gravity upon one thing: cries. Nietzsche's *"pereat mundus, fiam"* is turned into a cry of despair not incomparable to that of Pascal's *"Je n'approuve que de ceux qui cherchent en gemissant"*.

VII

In the doctrine of the affects, as well is in that of classical rhetoric, repetition is very important. The repetition of a line, or a phrase, given its appropriate context constantly strengthens the contours and lines of the material rendering its affect far stronger than before. For this reason, one should always be on the lookout for when an author repeats something, and then guard one's self against it—what is repeated shows his strongest rhetorical weapon, the affect he wishes to inflict upon you. Pascal's quote is repeated by Shestov numerous times throughout his work and gradually paired with similar lines from classical and religious literature. Pascal was a wonderful writer, and a most precious model for any student of the *style* of the French language— any line lifted from his writings is bound to appeal on an aesthetic level. What makes his lines so particularly affecting is their seeming lack of "philosophical" language, often touching on the borders of poetry

or psalm. The aesthetic quality draws a large extent of its force from the syntactic craft, the parallels often employed in the language, its laconicism. The precision with which Pascal utters his words awakens a quite sublime admiration in the reader, and intertwined with the content of the sentences often seem to melt into it, dilute, eclipse the generic meaning. This warm-blooded sensation of love which is awakened in the admiration of a certain sublimity thus takes over the object of the original meaning of the line, rendering *ceux qui cherchent* not as seekers out of despair, but strivers towards a lovable object. Those who seek in lamentation, however, always seek within despair, in which there is *nothing sublime*. All of literature for, at least, the past two centuries has managed to confuse sublimity with despair through the means described above. The sublimity a suffering author manages to present in his works is *never* the sublimity of the suffering itself, but merely of its antidote. This antidote need not necessarily be a real "cure", it may often be mere pity which nonetheless serves as a positive, though ultimately hurtful, affect rendering the suffering "lovable"— but never the suffering itself, only the positive object or affect which "justifies" its striving, its "sublime horizon"…

VIII

Such mixes of love and sorrow are not at all uncommon, neither in literature nor in life, and occur more often than most imagine— it may even be the reason some cry so often, later forgetting the pleasure they took therein. In his *"Les Passions de l'âme"* Descartes reports of precisely such a state in the following way: "*Lorſqu'un mari pleure ſa femme morte, laquelle (ainſi qu'il arrive quelquefois) il ſeroit faché de voir reſſuſcitée, il ſe peut faire que ſon cœur eſt ſerré par la triſteſſe que l'appareil des funérailles & l'abſence d'une perſonne à la converſation de laquelle il étoit accoutumé excitent en luy ; & il ſe peut faire que quelques reſtes d'amour ou de pitié qui ſe préſentent à ſon imagination tirent de véritables larmes de ſes yeux, nonobſtant qu'il ſente cependant une joie ſecrète dans le plus intérieur de ſon ame, l'émotion de laquelle a tant de pouvoir que la triſteſſe & les larmes qui l'accompagnent ne peuvent rien diminuer de ſa force."* Even in sorrow the remnants of love which are gently, subtly intermixed within can give us a secret joy… the way in which present mankind has managed to intimately associate joy with sorrow, melancholy with love, has been altogether quite artificial. There is a natural element, to be sure, which may be explained by Descartes' description of the forming of tears where the vapors which go to the eyes in joy are cooled down into tears by sorrow— in other words, sorrow may serve as a type of narcotic stimulant to increase the affective

sensation of a relatively small sensation of joy. Despite this, the mix of melancholy with love has been thoroughly superimposed by conscious artistic intent. This begins in decadent times where artists like Dostoyevsky, stuck in their chronic morbidity, need to turn morbidity into something lovable by mixing affects as described earlier. In Pascal we see the first *truly sick* great mind of the modern western world, an early, untimely decadent who belongs more in the Denmark of Kierkegaard than in enlightenment France. This parallel contrast between Descartes and Pascal has not been at all intentional, but should be proof enough of the extreme difference in tensions manifest in that time, and which were consequently manifest in Pascal the scientist and religious fanatic. — The confusion of joy and sorrow, melancholy and love, has been triumphant.

IX

As he continues, Shestov increases the number of quotations referring to sorrow, despair and crying. Through the employment of the affects of rhetoric, lamentation is ultimately rendered with a tinge of sublimity, of high estimation— it is elevated to the status of a virtue. This is all done tacitly, implicitly, through the stimulation of the organs of the reader. In the end, Shestov's works are filled from page to page with words such as "cries of Job" or

"De Profundis ad te clamavi, Domine". *Crying* is transformed into the ultimate means which man has in dealing and coping with this world— but in dealing with what? In coping *with what*? Every sufferer must have his enemy, it is shameful to admit that one suffers by one's own *impuissance*. The existence of enemies is often seen as a malaise, as something undesirable, unpleasant. Human history proves otherwise, however. Men, both strong and weak, love to have enemies, they have a positive *need* for enemies. The love the weak, broken man has for the enemy is ultimately this: that he has someone *to blame his suffering upon*. We have already seen in Dostoyevsky's *"laws of nature and arithmetic"* how this can make suffering seem *heroic,* sublime— the fundamental difference between the preaching of the "underground man's" fight against "the laws of nature" and that of the popular preaching of Christian Slavophilia is ultimately that the latter justifies suffering by a certain external resolution to it, meanwhile the former merely seeks to justify it by imaginary enemies, *by prolonging it*. It may seem obvious why Dostoyevsky chose the former, but Shestov didn't. In fact, Shestov unleashed an entire polemic attack on it, accusing Dostoyevsky of having abandoned the saintly, transcendent fight against the laws of nature for the mundane and lower goal of national preacher. As we have seen, both directions essentially had the same end-goal in mind, and

such a differentiation does therefore not say much about Dostoyevsky but more about Shestov. Why is he so adamant on the former, on the fight against the laws of nature? If for Dostoyevsky it was merely a metaphor he, to a point, wanted to believe, why does Shestov seem to take it so seriously? To Shestov "the laws of nature" are, without a doubt, also a literary metaphor, a rhetorical tool, a sublimating image— and yet he attaches a far greater, far more intense importance to it than any other writer, past or present. There are two directions here: either it is because these "laws of nature" present a *great* threat to man's life, or inversely because he cannot get beyond his cries and must use any justification possible for it. That the cries for breaking the "laws of nature", for the "impossible", prolongs suffering is not an issue, for he cannot get beyond it anyway. This is not, however, due to Shestov being the victim of a suffering that is particularly great, but because he simply does not possess the strength. The suffering is not rendered stronger thereby, merely more pleasurable.

X

And here I arrive at the problem of race. Shestov is a Jew, we are reading a Jew— about that there is no doubt. The Jew prolongs suffering, not necessarily out of hyper-sensitivity or because he really is the victim of a great torment, but because his nature is

impotent and too lethargic to even deal with it— first principle of weakness: it makes suffering more "desirable" out of laziness. His writings span nearly forty years, which would leave enough room to suggest that Shestov the old man simply became weary and broken by old age. Indeed, his youth abandoned him, this is quite clear; where there first were instances of brisk lightness in the work, there were later overtaxed cries, the rhetorically narcotic "strong images" spoken of earlier, the cries of Saint Paul. Age is however not the most important factor when diagnosing this man, even looking at his first work it is quite clear that we are dealing with a weak personality. In his works it can be difficult to discern Shestov as a personality from the personalities he describes— oftentimes they are intertwined, hence the time spent on the authors Shestov discusses. What can be revealed from his more personal writings nonetheless do nothing but confirm the suspicions deduced from his quotations of Pascal and Dostoyevsky. In his *"Journal of Thoughts"* we find the following line: *"This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the "time out of joint" or, more accurately, it will be celebrated - in early autumn, at the beginning of September. I am writing this down so as not to forget: the most important events in life - no one knows anything about them except you - are easily forgotten."* This "most important events in life"— what could this be? The death of a

loved one? His son died in the war, but this was not twenty-five years from the time of writing. Twenty-five years from the time of writing he had not written his first work, he was still in a university. From his interest in authors whose suffering is interior, which springs up suddenly, "metaphysically" as the "time out of joint", there is enough ground to assume that this was also such a "spiritual suffering". *If* his spiritual suffering was truly so great, however, wouldn't he have spent more time trying to solve it, and less time graphomaniacally trying to *justify* it, justify "crying"? The testimony of his work is proof enough: this suffering was surely intimate, internal, but it was not particularly remarkable. Hear the following he has to say about Nietzsche: *"What happened to Nietzsche happens to thousands of people, often under our very eyes. Perhaps they all react to their misfortune precisely in the same way as Nietzsche, only they remain silent."* What happened to Nietzsche was *unremarkable*— anyone who has read Nietzsche knows his suffering was not "unremarkable", but very remarkable indeed. Shestov himself characterizes Nietzsche's condition as "remarkable", but here he attributes it to the fact that Nietzsche did not remain *silent*. Is this really what is remarkable about Nietzsche, that he cried? Evidently we are *not* reading about Nietzsche here but about someone else completely: about Shestov himself.

XI

Shestov’s suffering was nothing remarkable, it was an "inner experience", to be sure, hence his focus on the inner world of authors, but it was nothing uncommon. It may have been a simple humiliation, bad conscience, shame, a realization of one’s impotence, of one’s being born weak. What Shestov prized as remarkable was in not keeping silent about such sufferings, in *crying*. In his being born a Jew we may find his ardent hatred for "the laws of nature" which made him that way— but once again, such great words are rendered into not much more than sublime metaphor for a suffering which is not that great at all. His weakness predisposes him to a tendency for pity, for self-pity, out of which any cry great or small must be multiplied, made more and more "worthy" of itself by its length. Shestov ultimately prizes this — though he does not say it — as the highest virtue. Yet any cry, as any suffering, must have its object, its great affective cause — the search for causes begins with suffering — and this he finds in the "laws of nature", and more in the "laws of nature" in its proxy to man, in "reason". According to Shestov reason is this yoke that binds man to the "laws of nature", known by its more philosophical term as "necessity". Reason, then, and not merely "the laws of nature" or "necessity" is what keeps man "bound" to his suffering

by demanding that he keep himself in accordance with "necessity". What is fascinating about this diagnosis of man is that it presupposes an idea of man without any authority, whose drawn-out sufferings are not caused by his *own* pity and impotent lamentation but by a certain "other". Such an idea of man has a lot in common with the ideologies of other botched types, such as the socialists. In a state of suffering and impotence one sees everything as equally impossible and impotent, when in reality it is not— when this is long drawn-out by pity, it has enough time to grow into an entire *idea*. The cause of the suffering is not placed within man and, consequently, the solution is not placed within man's own powers either. If "the laws of nature" and "reason" are parts of reality, and cannot merely be denied as a part of reality, then reality, life itself must be denied. Shestov phrases this more philosophically, that Dostoyevsky in his battling the "laws of nature" was no longer under the "influence" of the "eternal truths", that he was no longer under the allure of them as eternal, as absolute, that he could see beyond to tell that the "laws of nature" were man-made. This is a philosophical half-truth, just as the statement that "reason" cannot know everything; the laws of nature are a manmade definition of real phenomena— but since "reason cannot know everything" there is always the possibility of *unreal* phenomena which reason obstructs us from— reason must

therefore be obliterated. What an elegant turn of syllogism, taking a half-truth and gradually turning it into a lie! Here "reason" is the enemy to the "solution to the problem", and it is *assumed* that beyond "reason" the "solution to the problem" somehow lies…

XII

But why, why would the "solution" somehow lie beyond "reason"? It could very well be that if there is something reason does not succeed in knowing it would be something terrible (which would be more accurate), perhaps merely a scientific curiosity— why is it *assumed* that "reason" obstructs something good? Reason, in the mind of Shestov, is man's yoke to reality, it is then reality which obstructs the good, reality itself is bad. The linking of a mere philosophical observation to a soteriology is thus conditioned by the assumption that reality is bad and non-reality is good, it is conceived out of hatred for reality, out of pity. Indeed, as several experiences not only throughout man's history but even throughout your own life have proven that throwing yourself on the ground and crying to the heavens does *not* magically result in a miracle, you think it *impossible*. — But lo! *Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning*— does this not mean that the testimony of reason is not to be trusted because it cannot know *everything*, that it can never set the limits for the possible? *Therefore* "reason" must

be totally done away with, you must go mad. *"Only death and the madness of death can wake man from the nightmare of life." If* we are to follow Shestov's project all the way to the end, then, it seems that it is little less than a project of certain self-destruction— *not* in the sense of "pushing what is falling" as Nietzsche said, but of *running away* from all reason, all reality *all life*… But how does Shestov convince of this, and convince so powerfully, so thoroughly? In part, the answer to this has already been laid out, but it must once again be repeated how Shestov elevates pity to the *highest* virtue— and what is more, seemingly from the standpoint of a *condemnation of pity*. The epitaph to *"The Good in The Teachings of Tolstoy and Nietzsche"* is Nietzsche's famous *"woe to all who have no love higher than their pity"*— but what Shestov ultimately condemns by this is the "virtue" of pity as exercised by Tolstoy, the search for a certain type of virtuous life to solve one's spiritual torments— that is, he condemned *action*, not pity itself. This is done subtly, however, a change of definitions which, once again, happens *gradually* (now there can be no doubt we are dealing with a Jew), and not even moral action but action in general, actions in this world are condemned with them. For Shestov all solutions must lie not in action in this world, but positively outside this world, and the drive thereto is pity, which precisely negates this world, this reality. And in just this way

Shestov begins to seduce the reader into accepting pity as the highest virtue; in part by associating sublime affects with crying, in part by associating it with an affect of high *ambition*. It may seem paradoxical, even absurd, to even be able to link pity with high ambition, but the means by which it is done are not too complicated: such a turn of meaning meant, above all, to focus specifically on the aspect of the *"impossible"* of this world of salvation which pity desires, on how "reason" limits itself to the possible and thus limits man's striving, and how man follows along with it out of a certain cowardice— totally ignoring thereby that it is founded upon *pity.*

XIII

Nonetheless, the "surpassing of the impossible" has, rightly, associations with images of high ambitions, in the sense that it means surpassing mere prejudice in *this* world, by say climbing a mountain— these vague associations are brought to the fore to mix the affect of admiration with the idea of pity, for it is difficult to reconcile two contradictory ideas, but an idea with the affect of another grows in the mind as a virus, often unnoticed. This is quite marvelous, but the final turn is even more: in the end, the violation of reality, of the "laws of nature", which is a pitiful *running away* from all reality, is elevated to mean *will to power*... "*This is also*

what Nietzsche's "will to power wishes to be." The usage of Nietzsche to justify this logic does not end here: Shestov goes further, he takes Nietzsche's scorn for the scholars, for the *lesende Müssigänger,* and then takes this scorn for the intellectual sterility of *mere* rationalists as a condemnation of rationalism *itself*. Then, Shestov learns from a *superior* Jew and uses the irony of Heine, which coupled with the veil of Nietzsche's contempt gives Shestov the opportunity to play-act as an individual who looks down upon the logicians out of superiority and scorn, and not out of pity for the cruelty which necessity inflicts upon man. Of course, even this "cruelty", which per Nietzsche could be seen as a showcase of strength, is used as a rhetorical advantage by Shestov. He refers to Plotinus' *"final battle",* to Matthew 11:12, to *prove* that such a position is grounded upon strength— but indeed, Plotinus' "final battle" is merely, as he himself says, a flight, a φυγὴ an escape… to be sure, the philosopher who defines the possible and impossible may be trying to escape a suffering himself, but in that event there is no difference between him and Shestov, except that the former's methods have the actual possibility of working— anything else is rhetoric, admirative images superimposed. The paradoxical mixing of affects with contradictory ideas should be clear enough at this point, I need not say more.

XIV

A document which is of utmost interest to understanding Shestov is his written conversations with Benjamin Fondane, a Romanian Jew and Shestov's only disciple. The words with which Fondane refers to his master, the one to whom he "owes everything", gives a clear enough image of the weeping which unites them both, which turned both of them away from poetry and music to philosophy, the "most important" per Plotinus, the "practice of death". In it, we find Shestov the man— an ordinary, if not somewhat unpleasantly dull personality. What is most fascinating of all — to not say disappointing — is the *mundanity* of his death: he died reading about Hindu religion, in a hospital, and underlined the following line: *Nicht trübe Askese kennzeichnet den Brahmanwisser, sondern das freudig hoffnungsvolle Bewusstsein der Einheit mit Gott*. A pathetic, but truthful image: *the consolation of philosophy*. What else is there to it! All is consolation! All the images, all the rhetoric about the "laws of nature" was a way of making *himself* feel larger in the fantasy of his literature. What he cared about was peace, and all the scoffing at the logicians who seek peace at the expense of adventure was theatricality— *plaudite amici comedia finita est!* And Nietzsche, that German, had disturbed his sleep! *"la Généalogie de la morale. J'en ai commencé la lecture à huit heures*

du soir ; je ne l'ai achevée qu'à deux heures du matin. Cela m'a remué, bouleversé, je ne pouvais dormir, je cherchais des raisons pour m'opposer à cette pensée affreuse, cruelle... Sans doute la Nature était dure, indifférente; sans aucun doute tuait-elle calmement, implacablement... Mais la pensée, ce n'était pas la Nature; il n'y avait aucune raison pour qu'elle aussi voulut tuer les faibles, les pousser. Pourquoi aider encore la Nature dans sa tâche effrayante ?" The only way he could rid himself of such a horrible impression was by the consolation of a God who takes away all the sufferings of the world, who can abort Nature in its "frightening task", even if only in imagination, in "faith". Certainly, he speaks of a God who can move mountains, who can change the past, but in the end it does not amount more to whatever means end his fears, dull his sense of reality, calmed his conscience. Shestov, however, was too keenly aware of the pitiful *smallness* of his desire, he could not tolerate such humiliation, hence "the violation of the laws of nature", hence, too, his insistence on Nietzsche as totally *destroyed* by nature, his acceptance of the law of Nature as a *faute de mieux*… only by tracing Nietzsche's "Overman", his "self-overcoming" to weakness, could he bring Nietzsche down to a lower level than himself, and make his critique seem justified, superior, and himself, Shestov, as grander. For now, he could live

in the *hope* of escaping reality, he would be exalted in his hatred towards it, he could live in his own sublime.

XV

There is one final affect, however, which Shestov inflicts upon the reader; perhaps the most important, the most effective: despair. As any soteriology — Shestov's philosophy is a soteriology — it lives on the affect of despair, only then can it nourish its own: hope. Hope and despair are as closely related as the branch is to its fruit, hope is indeed a terrible disease. Like pity, it keeps what is ripe for death, it encourages that which is inimical to progress, to overcoming, to becoming. Despair is the means by which the hope of salvation is sustained, by utterly crushing the person whom it subjugates, by denying all possibility of solution in this world, by denying man the usage of his own faculties, it finally extends its "helping hand", which in the total absence of joy and strength seems all that more strong, all that more great, all that more important… The soteriologists went one step further: they *invented* imaginary enemies, such as "reason" (there is no such *thing* as "reason") and "satan" to, out of this false dialectic craft its opposite: the savior. And by the greatness of the suffering which is magnified, the importance of the savior is multiplied to absurd levels— as the *only* possibility of life! In the end, the only thing

that is left for man is the *practice of death* (and not merely in the Platonic sense), not only the hope of salvation in the "next life" but of a constant self-torture and psychological self-flagellation for which God, in his "mercy", will at any moment descend— even the hopes of survival in *this* life become tied to something imaginary, something outside of life. Thus, God, in his infinite mercy, *must* descend, for man's suffering has become impossible, or to say it in the words of Pascal: "*L'incarnation montre à l'homme la grandeur de sa misère par la grandeur du remède qu'il a fallu..."*

Book the Fourth

I

It is evident now that the struggle for man's salvation, the hope for redemption in man, the hope in redemption *for* man, has ceased being a mere object of piety, of "good works" or of any worldly laws— the fight for man's salvation has become spiritual. What else is there to say? Rejoice, oh children, in the blood of your savior! Drink from the fountain of His love, oh you deserted children of Eva— work the plagues of the flesh, suckle upon the head full of blood and wounds, lick the work of the thorns you pious ones: this is your savior! — The mystery of the incarnation is the most mysterious problem ever posed in a system of soteriology for man, and its purpose— what is its purpose? Would we do well in repeating the words of Pascal? But we don't need Pascal, we don't even need Shestov, for only a century before Pascal nearly the exact same words were uttered by Luther: *Si credimus, Christum redemisse homines per sanguinem suum, totum hominem fateri cogimur fuisse perditum : alioqui Chriftum faciemusvel superfluum vel partis vililsimie redemptorem.* By the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ man was saved— *otherwise the whole of man was lost*… I hope one has

begun to *divine* the boldness behind these words; it cannot be underestimated. *If* the son of God did not descend into the world, the *whole* of man would have been lost— not merely a part, not merely an aspect of his life, not merely an attribute of virtue— *the whole of man*… Further, we find almost the *exact same words* some 1500 years earlier in the words of the Apostle Paul, for are not the words *"If Christ has not been risen, then our preaching is in vain"* merely another formulation of this *same* thought? — But what about preaching? Is not preaching merely another mission which, whether successful or not, may merely damage the quality of man's life, but not totally absolve it? Let us not be mistaken on this point: Christ says that He is the life, the truth and the way— take that *as you will*, but Christ still remains, if we are to believe his words, *the life*— that is, *extra me vita not sit*, outside of Me there is not to be life. And again, Luther: *Deinde, cum Christus dicatur via, veritas et vita, idque per contentionem, ut quidquid non est Christus, id neque via, sed error; neque veritas, sed mendacium; neque vita, sed mors sit.* Whatever is outside of Christ, whatever is outside His message, whatever is outside the preaching of His message— is death— and what is this preaching except the doctrine of the resurrection? If we are to take Paul and Luther at their words, and take their logic to the very end, then it must necessarily follow that without the incarnation, which is

presupposed by the death and resurrection, there is *no life*, and if Christ was not *incarnatus,* man would have been forever lost. The logic which links the *necessary* incarnation, death and resurrection, the crucifixion of a "poor and ignorant Jew" to the salvation of man seems elusive at first, but is nonetheless clear. The saved *requires* something he is being saved from, in this case man is saved from "sin". Original sin becomes the precondition for the suffering of man and thus the precondition for the incarnation. The causal chain between "original sin" and suffering is not altogether clear— its absolution is *not* a return to paradise as the freedom from "original sin" would mean in the context of the Old Testament, but the freedom from suffering granted by grace. "Sin", in any case, is identical to the cause of suffering, which is magically absolved by the grace granted by the savior as he suffered the cross *for* the sins of the world. The isolated event of the crucifixion itself is an occurrence which does *not* directly affect mankind as a whole in any external way, *therefore* the link between the incident of the death and resurrection of Christ and the salvation of man must be found elsewhere— if the external link is missing an internal one must be found, it must become spiritual, as Paul says— it must become psychological.

II

Paul, it can be said, by making the struggle spiritual, was the inventor of psychology. Such a statement is of course idle and quite silly, because if Paul did anything it was not "invent" a realm of spirit *ex nihilo* but rather institute tendencies which were there in humanity since time immemorial. Paul did not rise out of nowhere, he did not find the "struggle of the spirit" magically within himself— the process, as Nietzsche calls it, of gradually clumsier and clumsier interpretations of the crucifixion to justify its non-bearing upon external circumstances through internal (esoteric) means began before Paul and continued after Paul. What is more, from its inception Christianity drew continually from the influences of the rotten, worm-infested corpse of the Hellenic world— it *drew* into itself all the *previous* soteriologies which the damned soul of the decaying ancient world had manufactured in an attempt to… to do what? Save itself? Save itself indeed; some through ritual madness, others through calming nervous stimuli in the *hope* of salvation, others by seeking a way *out* of this world. Those that remained in the calm hope of salvation were *the people*, those that devoted themselves to seeking a way *out* were "cultivated" intellectuals— though the gap between them is not nearly as significant as it first seems… Christianity, at first, drew almost exclusively from the soteriology of the *people*, and it is not until the time of the gnostic sects, culminating with Paul, that the

intellectual refinement of helleno-gnostic soteriology comes into the fore. Paul was intimately aware of the philosophy of the gnostics, which he then, seeking his own *personal* savior (let us not be fooled on this point, all soteriology is egotistical— hence "personal immortality"…) translated into the logic of the gnostics. For Christ, a bringer of light into darkness as conceived by Paul, *is* a gnostic savior. But Paul needed *more*; the savior could not merely be a cold bringer of saving knowledge from the realm of light, as the gnostics would have him— salvation could not be a calm matter, it had to be a crescendo of utmost anxiety, of utmost pain, of utmost suffering and agony which could not only *save* but also *answer* the suffering of the Jew Paul… This, once again, is not Pauline originality but *thoroughly* Hellenic, thoroughly derived from the mystery cults whose influence early Christianity adopted with every step… This is not idle speculation: Paul attended the cult of Attis. To say that this was a conscious construction by Paul would of course be false; Maccoby Hyam rightly observes that these elements must have subconsciously mingled and crystalized as an image within the mind of Paul for long, building an instinctual tension which at the sight of the figure of Jesus must have converged, formalized and interpreted the crucified into themselves. Paul is a Jew— let us not forget this. The Jew, to be sure, consciously manufactures and neurotically plans ahead of

time, but the frequency with which this is done is much exaggerated. In truth, the Jew simply *instinctually* creates extraordinary fantasies out of despairing delirium which finally borders on hallucination— and all of this out of the tension of his weakness. The "hallucination" which is alluded to here should be clear enough… The image of Christ as envisioned by Paul was instinctually *willed*, therefore he also willed the means. The Pauline Christ which we are left with is the following: the suffering of man is redeemed by the savior in the spirit, which descends into the material world of darkness and man; not through knowledge, but through spontaneous enlightenment brought by sharing in man's suffering and death.

III

The main point of divergence from the gnostic savior is the *spontaneous* mechanism of salvation, which may lend itself more freely to a *pathology of salvation* rather than a mere "psychology". Paul's soteriology is far more barbaric than that of the gnostics— *also* far more honest… Here, the mechanism of salvation is not *knowledge* (which in itself is merely a mirage and cannot bring any actual salvation), but the *spontaneous affect of pity*— the experience of pity at the image of the suffering at the cross which brings a purging, all-consuming trauma. It was then *necessary* for

Christ to not only die and be resurrected but to descend into the flesh and suffer as many physical torments as possible, for only *then* was mankind's suffering and wailing not only redeemed, but *justified*. But again: *"If Christ has not been risen, then our preaching is in vain"*— if the son of man merely dies, suffering and death remain earthly objects of shame— but if the resurrection is true, if the "laws of nature" have been violated, *then* all sense and good taste can be turned upside down *with it*. The resurrection, then, did not only mean an inversion of the laws of physical nature, but also the inversion of the *nature of man*, a total inversion of his psychology! Hence, Paul's strange words: *"Those who are crying should live as if they were not crying. Those who are happy should live as if they were not happy." Here* we find Paul's originality: it is not only a purging trauma through the cathartic experience of death and rebirth, as it was in the cult of Attis, *nor* is it only a speculative exercise in salvation through a realm of knowledge— here, the "saving knowledge", called "grace", is *expressly* linked to affective spontaneity of the *absurd* image of the death and resurrection of Christ; salvation finds its ground not in concrete knowledge, but in the magical, *spontaneous* sensation of rebirth. Paul's faith is thoroughly antinomian, its expressed *purpose* is to be a violation to all common sense, all good taste, all "laws"— the reversing of the laws of the nature of man was the end, everything else was a

means thereto. The *knowledge* of salvation finds its ground in the *experience* of salvation. Conversely, the experience of salvation must extend and justify itself in *everything* through the doctrine of the gnosis— an affect thus becomes an entire *idea*… What first struck Paul on the road to Damascus was precisely this affective image of the suffering Christ, this sensation of "rebirth" at the experience of agonizing pity for the tormented flesh— this must have been the earliest idea of Christian salvation in the mind of Paul. But the spontaneous catharsis of momentary "rebirth" was, of course, merely momentary, and did not result in total salvation. Therefore, the image of the suffering Christ was demoted from the primary path to salvation and reduced to a rhetorical *means* of convincing towards the mysterious salvation through that spiritual phantom "grace". With this, the final stage of de-naturalization was complete: the experience of salvation would not come from *any* affect of the flesh at all, *even* if it be of pity and reverence, but from above, totally from above.

IV

But with this, still not enough has been said on the doctrine of the incarnation. The descent into the flesh, into the realm of darkness of man, meant that without Christ's descent man was forever lost. It is not merely a problem of the death and rebirth of the son of

God, but of the necessary restoration of the flesh. Per Tertullian: "*Si haec sunt homo quem deus redemit, tu haec erubescenda illi facis qui redemit, et indigna, quae nisi dilexisset non redemisset? Nativitatem reformat a morte regeneratione caelesti, carnem ab omni vexatione restituit"* — indeed, the descent of the son of God into the flesh: could there be anything more *shameful* than this? But the son of God freely chose to descend into the flesh and suffer death, that man may be redeemed. The incarnation was thus necessary that the filthiest, the lowest, the most despicable parts of man had the possibility of redemption— if Christ were, apart from spirit, not also flesh, how could he have claimed to share in the salvation of those whose flesh he had rejected? But it remains a fact that the descent into the flesh *is shameful*— that the holiest of holies had to stand upon the dirty earth and beaten, stricken, crucified to death would die like a dog *that man may be redeemed*— that this was at all *necessary* for the redemption of man *remains* an object of shame… Tertullian himself acknowledged it openly, and yet with unparalleled boldness proclaims the following: "*Crucifixus est dei filius: non pudet, quia pudendum est. et mortuus est dei filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. et sepultus resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile."* And again: "*Agnoscunt hominem deo mixtum, et negant hominem: mortuum credunt, et quod est mortuum ex incorruptela natum esse*

contendunt, quasi corruptela aliud sit a morte." Man is ashamed of man, man is ashamed that salvation would not be brought through triumph, but through defeat; not through knowledge, but through folly; not through life, but through death. It would seem the height of insolence to the men of knowledge to claim that the flesh is redeemed not through aspiring towards the higher, but through having the higher *lower* itself. Hence, the claim towards the strength of the supposed Gospel message: its insolence, which seems as folly to "men", is a proof of its strength— what is shameful ceases to be shameful, what is impossible becomes possible. And at the heart of the proposed Gospel message we find, again, this same image of the incarnation: it is, at any rate, far more honest than the image of the resurrection— for what *does* this "overcoming of the impossible" mean, if not the total overturning of all that is shameful into an object of admiration, of beatitude? Let us be very clear here: if the purpose of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ was to prove that for God "all things are possible", why would the incarnation have been *necessary* to begin with? Of course, it is necessary that Christ descend into the flesh for the flesh, i.e. the whole of man, to be redeemed— but this is *only* true if necessity is presupposed. If for God all things are possible, why couldn't God violate this necessity? Tertullian let his God overcome the impossibility of

rebirth, but he *would not* let him overcome the necessity of the incarnation— that is, the incarnation was *willed*, it was *this* event that was most important to Tertullian, perhaps to an extent to Paul himself. Why otherwise argue fervently about the incarnation? Why the words *"Qui negat Christum in carne venisse hic antichristus est"* ? Evidently, what the incarnation signifies is, more than a desire to violate the laws of nature, a desire to violate the laws of man. If the violation of the laws of nature had been the primary goal of these believers, would they not have stopped at claiming that Christ can at any moment perform actual, physical miracles? Restore a kingdom of gold upon the earth? — But this they could not afford; for this obviously would not happen, and the necessity for salvation, for justification, was too imminent, too urgent. Therefore, as before, the fight was *necessarily* made spiritual— only there could they find the possibility to overturn man's laws *from within*. The sword is momentary, the word is eternal.

V

Thus, if they could not make a leprosy-ridden body healthy again, if they couldn't turn an ugly man beautiful on the outside, if they couldn't bring a kingdom of gold to the most despicable of men— if the overturning of the impossible from outside was not possible,

they would have to overturn the impossible from within. What is shameful, must be made admirable— hence, the incarnation. *Non pudet, quia pudendum est*. Let us repeat these words wherever there be men! *Prosus credibile est, quia ineptum est!* Paul, like Tertullian, was an ugly, world-weary man— it is no wonder *why* these people seek *en gemissant* so fervently after the message of the incarnation of the son of God. But what remained of it? What was left from the doctrine of the incarnation? What was made of this manufacture of redemption? In a sense, all of it remained and none of it did. The evolution of Christianity was one of the gradual re-interpretation and dilution of, perhaps, the most sophisticated system of religious soteriology on earth, into a religion more or less like all others. What of spontaneous enlightenment through pity? What could have remained of it? Affective rebirth is not the path to final salvation (what Paul was seeking was final), otherwise he would have stayed with the *cultus Attidis*— it is, however, a strong *means* towards convincing others of the power of the resurrection story— but this is a different aspect. Paul transformed the physical catharsis of the mystery cults into spiritualized form, and called it "grace" or "faith". What "faith" meant in this case, was total *antinomia*— that is, *not* enlightenment through agitation of the flesh, but through agitation of the mind: madness; sickness. With this, Paul's system of soteriology was complete: "faith", that

organ for what does not exist, that organ which *does not* exist, would grant man salvation from suffering, and not the law. Obviously, this spontaneous enlightenment which would make that *"The righteous should live by faith"* did not occur, and Paul ultimately had to resort to law for his followers. If the logic of spontaneous salvation is to be taken to its end, however, it would naturally follow that salvation cannot be brought by man's faculties, but *only* through faith. Otherwise, Christ's suffering is rendered superfluous: "*Si credimus, Christum redemisse homines per sanguinem suum, totum hominem fateri cogimur fuisse perditum : alioqui Christum faciemusvel superfluum vel partis vililsimie redemptorem."* — Let us make it clear once more: if salvation is *not* brought by the law, *nor* by the faculties of pity and catharsis, it is thoroughly spiritual, psychological. Faith itself, which previously was mere *piety*, mere *trust in God*, becomes something completely different: a magical organ and expressed *means* for salvation. Here we get this most remarkable turn in the history of a religion: what was previously mere law, mere organization of life, the utilitarian use of a religion, becomes *divorced* from its ground and made totally groundless, useless— *while keeping its authority*. When "faith" becomes psychological, all the law is translated along with it. The taboo against "the tree of knowledge"; formerly a precautionary measure against scientific

curiosity which could upset the societal order; now a ban against knowledge itself, against *thinking*, against the faculty of reason itself! — The central syllogism of the entire logic of Pauline Christian soteriology is exceedingly clear—: Christ was necessarily crucified for man's salvation; if Christ were not crucified man would necessarily have no salvation; Christ is therefore the *only* path to salvation. *"I am the life, the truth and the way"— Nihil extra me*. Without the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ there is no life, man in his *entirety* is lost— what remains then is *only* the realm of death, the realm of Satan! It cannot be overstated just how *significant* the distinction between *parts* of man and the *whole* of man really is— what this means is: "Christ" does not merely redeem "a part" of life, He redeems the *whole* of man and life; without Christ there is not merely a part of life missing, but the whole of it; without Christ man cannot live.

VI

In this way, Luther was far *bolder* than Tertullian when proclaiming that Christ cannot merely be reduced to a redeemer of the lowest qualities in man— he must redeem the *entirety of man*, otherwise his suffering was superfluous. If Christ were nothing but the redeemer of the impious and impious vices in man, of the lowest and most corrupt aspects of the human being, that would

entail that man possesses *higher* aspects capable of virtue totally *outside* of the redemption of Christ— that man has the ability to stand above Christ's redemption *by his own free choice and faculties*— and then, to what end Christ! *If* free will in man towards virtue is true, then Christ is superfluous, or worse— caprice! "*Quid opus Spiritu? Quid Christo? Quid Deo? Si liberum arbitrium vincere potest animi motus ad turpia?"* But this is Luther— what about Paul? We would do well to recall, once again, the words *"εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, κενὸν ἄρα τὸ κήρυγμα ἡμῶν, κενὴ δὲ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν."* and add, too: *"ὁ δὲ διακρινόμενος ἐὰν φάγῃ κατακέκριται, ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως · πᾶν δὲ ὃ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἁμαρτία ἐστίν." Whatever is not of faith is sin*— whatever is not of Christ is condemnation; whatever is not of life is death. Here we see, once again, this strange thought formulated with utmost vehemence, with utmost clarity— with utmost conviction. And lastly: *"ἀ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν."* The syllogism has never been any clearer: sin is death and faith is life. *Sin*, accordingly, is the natural condition of man, as per the *psychological* translation of the doctrine of the *peccatum originale.* If "faith" was to be the spiritual (read: psychological) tool or reed by which man would once again *be able to live,* "faith" would need its opposite, contrasting condition: hence, sin. Let us not be

deceived here: if our struggle, as Paul says, is indeed "spiritual", then "sin", too, is a spiritual concept— *more* than what cast man outside of paradise— it is what keeps him inside of hell: "*Non cognovisse, quasi ignoremus mundum esse regnum Satanae, ubi, praeter naturalem ex carnis origine excitari ignaviam, etiam nequissimis spiritibus regnantibus, superiores in ipsa excitatae sunt induciae daemonicae—nec iam humanae tenebrae simpliciter, sed daemonicae."*

VII

The world is the kingdom of Satan, therefore the wisdom of men cannot but also be that of Satan— what is not of faith is sin. The logic of the savior, taken to its endpoint, means precisely this: that man, being *either* of Christ or not of Christ, of faith or not of faith, of life or of death— is either a slave of faith or of sin. This is, must again be pointed out, *only* the consequence of the spiritualization of "the savior"— not as a savior of a people from external circumstances, as it was in the Old Testament, but as an *element in the matrix of universal laws themselves*. If Christ is life *itself*, he is no longer a contingent entity or incident, but an absolute *law*— if life be the law, it follows that death cannot be the law, in the same way that two bodies in the physical world cannot occupy the same space— *consequently*, if life be not the law, death is the law.

Abstractio Dei; Abstractio Christi— this is the meaning of soteriology, this great *either or*. The doctrine of salvation, in order to justify a savior, must also justify an enemy; if this doctrine is made *spiritual*, it extends over the infinite space of psychological space, to dominate every single particle, every single speck of dust, every single atom in man's "soul" so that *all* movements, *all* forces within man are interpreted through it. Not only is the acquisition of spiritual perfection, a part of man's life, interpreted through it, but indeed the *whole* of man's suffering: if man suffers he is with satan, if man does not suffer he is with Christ. Of course, the faithful must suffer *with Christ*, but only as a means, for the end is always that of eternal salvation, *requies aeterna*. A medicine is only as strong as the sickness it fights against; a cure only as strong as its enemy. For the mechanism of "faith" to work, "faith" had to be as convincing as possible, as strong as possible, which would only be realizable through the relative quantum of its enemy; for "faith" to be strong, its enemy, "sin", had to be as terrible as possible: what else would be the meaning of Pascal's *"l'incarnation montre à l'homme la grandeur de sa misère par la grandeur du remède qu'il a fallu"*? For "sin" to be as terrible as possible it was necessary for it *not only* to account for the sufferings of the physical world, nor for vice or debauchery, nor for occasional remorse— but for the *entirety* of the spectrum man's

suffering, it had to be responsible for *everything*. *"Il nous semble même très injuste car qu'y a(-t-)il de plus contraire aux règles de notre misérable justice que de damner éternellement un enfant incapable de volonté pour un péché où il paraît avoir si peu de part, qu'il est commis six mille ans avant qu'il fût en être. Certainement rien ne nous heurte plus rudement que cette doctrine. Et cependant sans ce mystère, le plus incompréhensible de tous, nous sommes incompréhensibles à nous-mêmes. Le noeud de notre condition prend ses replis et ses tours dans cet abîme. De sorte que l'homme est plus inconcevable sans ce mystère, que ce mystère n'est inconcevable à l'homme."* Man suffers, *therefore* there must be a cause to his suffering, for he who finds a cause finds a remedy— etiology is the sister of soteriology.

VIII

The interpretation of original sin as the cause of the suffering of man is mysterious, but suffering and suffering as a part of man *without* the explanation of original sin is even more incomprehensible. What else is there to it? If what is not of faith is sin, then what is not of faith is suffering and death. Again, Luther:*"Si igitur Scriptura (inquis) dilucida est, cur in hac re tot saeculis viri excellentes ingenio excutiant? Respondeo: caecutierunt sic, in laudem et gloriam liberi arbitrii."* What Luther

calls "free will" in this passage may, at any rate, be translated into Pascal's *"belle raison corrompue [qu']a tout corrompu."* Antinomianism as we know it today was given a body by Paul in the church, and the Christian *hatred* towards reason has been its greatest proponent. Again, if the "original sin" must be translated into psychological terms, and all Judaism with it, man *by himself* cannot be anything but a slave to this sin— and again, if the "original sin" explains the suffering of man, in psychological terms it explains that all suffering is caused by sin continually ruling *in him*; reason, free choice, thinking, are all faculties of sin and can *therefore* not lead to anything good — *liberum arbitrium non possit velle bonum.* What else might we not find behind these words than the bold proclamation "man is eternally condemned!" ? What *else* could be the consequence of ascribing suffering to sin, of ascribing suffering to the moral? And what a triumphant turn of syllogism! All is sinful and can *therefore* not lead to anything good— could there be any sentence less natural, less human, less true? With this, finally, the total denaturalization of all human instincts and all human faculties was finally at an end. *The interpretation of suffering through the moral*, the interpretation of "suffering" as a product of "sin"— let us repeat these words again: *all is sinful and can therefore not lead to anything good*— what amount of folly, irrationality, upside-down logic is there not to be

found here? It is always these *therefores*, often invisible, which so trick the eye of the beholder, which so often lead to the most absurd, the most nonsensical, the most destructive compromises of understanding. To *assume* that the nature of suffering follows, not the laws of nature itself, but those of a totally different, arbitrary "cause" — as if suffering were a punishment of bad "conduct"! Here is the triumph of morality; here is the masterpiece of etiology; to trace the elusive nature of suffering to something *outside* of nature. With this, the law of nature and life is aborted, with this morality takes all the causes of suffering into itself. Indeed, *if* suffering naturally follows from sin, then man *is* lost— for man cannot do anything but sin! Per the morality of the Christian doctrine, which makes out of itself a total antithesis of nature and natural causes, nature itself cannot be anything but sinful and *therefore* not lead to anything but suffering. But how compromising, how absolutely *nonsensical* is still not this *"therefore"*! To not only assume but to outright *lie* that there is a magical *link* between two causally unrelated things, to create *a false causality*… With this, all of nature, traced to an imaginary cause, is absolutely denied.

IX

But what else could be the purpose of the Christian doctrine but to expressly *deny* all of nature and contingent reality? Paul wished it as an *end:* "*God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful." Who* is really ment behind this "God" should be clear enough at this point— it is Paul himself, his own whim, his own fancy— though *not* exactly this false "God as caprice" of Shestov who can grant *anything*— it is a much more *specific* conception of "God", not *necessarily* that of a God who can grant anything, but of a far more specific *function*; it is Paul's desire, his method, his eschaton; it is Paul, whose entire end-goal is to *destroy* the laws of men— and lacking the power to bring them down by the sword, he resorts to bringing them down in the realm of the spirit. Whatever Paul writes is absolutely fit towards this end— he did not achieve "spontaneous salvation" through Christ, nor would any of his followers, *but this was never the end*. The eschatology of the gnostics is practically done away with, whatever eschatology there is in Pauline Christianity is merely an *excuse*. What he borrowed from gnosticism was part of an *image*, which brought together with the affect of pitiful catharsis borrowed from the barbaric brutality of the mystery cults (for pity is a barbarism), created the *paradigm* of antinomia: the Paulian Imago Dei Christive. Christ in Paul is above

all an *image*, though not an image meant to bring about immanent salvation, but an image to convince by its strength, by its affect, to bring together all the pitiful plebeian instincts of the world-weary, decaying, stinking corpse of the judeo-helleno-alexandrian world of late antiquity— Paul was the plebeian genius *par excellence*. And all of this so that the affect of mortal, barbaric pity and positive *justification* in *sanguine Domini* would win over all reason, all good taste, all common sense *at all* for the ugliest, filthiest most rightfully *condemned* of people to be able to "violate the law of non-contradiction" and proclaim that their ugliness was beautiful, that their vice was virtue, that their disgusting hearts were pure— *"Those who are crying should live as if they were not crying. Those who are happy should live as if they were not happy." Ah sancta stultitia!* Antinomia was not the end, it was merely the means— the confounding of the strong, the destruction of the healthy, the slander of the beautiful was the *goal*. In fact, I would claim that *there is no psychology of salvation in Paul*— there is merely a psychology of destruction. What we find in Paul are merely the *seeds* of a psychology of salvation, which itself wills destruction, which itself *thrives* upon destruction, but towards different ends. The concept of "grace" is merely another word for the idea of the purging trauma of the image of Christ on the cross, but the concept of Luther's "grace freely given" is almost entirely

absent as an active element. Conversely, the *image* of the suffering Christ is almost entirely absent in Luther and only present as *argument*. There is very little of pity as a means of salvation in Luther— Paul was instinctually "of the people"; Luther was not, only in his consequences.

X

In Luther and Pascal we find radically different men from that of the Jew Paul, who, like any Jew, is motivated by hatred more than by despair. Luther and Pascal were ultimately men of a noble kind which you would be pressed to find *at all* in 1st century Judea— they were also, let us be very clear about this, the *victims* of the seeds laid down in the doctrine of Paul. Though Paul died, his ideas lived on and continued to grow as a natural organism beyond his death, *even* beyond the achievement of his ends. However, ideas, any ideas, do not grow on their own, but find the fertile ground for their growth in racial and biological types. It is then, as a chemical reaction, that the seeds of Paul's logic at the hands of a German barbarian grow to their most extreme end-point. Though the words "what is not of faith is sin" be in Paul, the logic behind such and similar words did *not* grow to their logical end, such an end being irrelevant to the imminent ends Paul had in mind. Despite this, the conclusion of Paul's demented logic reveals just

how *harmful* the instincts from which they grew from really were— *not* for the plebs but for those more *sensitive* and *stronger* types which would be made sick *by* them. — The people hate reason, they hate good taste, health, vitality, confidence— all strong and enabling instincts in life. The entirety of their impulses and instincts are positively *directed* at the justification of their botched kind (which naturally results from large numbers) by the instinct of self-preservation— for this, the justification of ugliness, stupidity and vice of any kind is a necessary *means*. In short, all the instincts of the people have the express goal in mind of destroying life, to bring it down to their level, for only then is their preservation ensured. Every single aspect of the doctrine of Paul was *instinctually* made to fit this end, the Jew being also the plebeian *par excellence*. This, by itself, would cause enough destruction— but the instinct for destruction does not end there. Such repulsive and impotent, purely *negative* instincts, sanctified into ideas and mingled with the instincts of higher men, creates a destruction which in contrast makes the downward leveling of material and social circumstances seem *anecdotal.* It must almost be axiomatically posited that the distance between "men" and "mankind" is larger than that between mankind and the chimpanzee. Whatever is beneficial to mankind is harmful to men. Men, also known as great men, by the intensity of their instincts

are sensible to truly feel the *extent* to which those of mankind are destructive— often to their own detriment. The instinct towards destruction, ultimately, leads to nothing but the total rejection of everything, to death. The people merely take it to the practical extent which suits their needs— but in individual men such as Luther and Pascal, who by the strength of their impulses feel every instinct far more intensely, these are multiplied to absurd levels of intensity so as to reach their final, organic end-point— Luther and Pascal were *sensitive* to the extent of the rot at bottom of the impulses of the weary plebeians, were they to be extrapolated, lived through to the very end. To them, the truth which hid behind the words *"what is not of faith is sin"* was *palpable*, despite what the author may have meant by them, *if* they were to be taken seriously as *more* than a means— as law.

XI

Paul did not take his "spiritual war" to the very end, but only to the point that suited his means, otherwise he would have divined something quite different altogether. He did, however, *make* the war spiritual in the first place, open the door to it, sanctify its gate with His name and blood. — To make of Paul a "great man" would of course be a mistake: he did not "sniff out" the entire spectrum of spiritual conditions of his time, he merely compiled them, and with

rhetorical *genius* made the most successful doctrine of plebeian cancer ever conceived upon this earth— though with this let me be very clear on the fact that "Christianity" in itself is nothing but the *body* of an instinctive tendency which existed before it and will always continue to exist after it, a body which has very often been filled with the *opposite* instincts than those which dominated in 1st century Judaea… Paul's spiritual war still raged on, and continues to rage on, reaching its culmination in those few, unlucky men like Luther and Pascal. No, Luther did *not* "divine" the message behind Paul's words, but he did extend their logic to their utmost extreme— in that sense, he was a million times more *truthful* than Paul. Nowhere in Paul do we find words comparable to the boldness of Luther's "*Si credimus, Christum redemisse homines per sanguinem suum, totum hominem fateri cogimur fuisse perditum : alioqui Christum faciemusvel superfluum vel partis vililsimie redemptorem."* Nowhere in Paul do we find this "*totum hominem*". Luther and Pascal were the *fulfillment* of the logic of Judaism translated into psychology— what were previously merely tools for the accomplishment of Paul's message, transformed themselves into *law of life*, into wagers of *nature itself*… "Sin", for instance, became more than the mere absence from the bringer of glad tidings, it now came to mean absence from the *whole of life*. Christ became not *only* the bringer of a "better life", but the *ground*

of life itself. With this, every single instinct, every single movement of the organs, every single atom and speck of dust of the spirit down to the most basic and fundamental movements of life were *usurped* and under *its* authority— the *entire Interpretatio Christiana* brought the rights of the interpretation of *all phenomena in the universe* under *itself!* Now every movement, if the logic were to be followed to its end, *had* to be interpreted not by its natural and spontaneous instinctual character, but through something completely *different* and totally *divorced* from them. With this, it became impossible to properly interpret man: an anti-natural causality built upon totally *imaginary* causes— man became interpreted through a conception which was the absolute *antithesis of man*. Such an accusation is often leveled against science— let it be said that such an accusation is *a million times more worthy* of being leveled against the *falsification* of man through "metaphysical causality"— science, at the very least, has *nature* for its pre-requisite, nature being a part the human being and "metaphysical causes" being a part of absolutely nothing existing.

XII

And this Luther and Pascal lived through almost to its very end. They saw that, if the Christian conception of the world were to be

taken seriously, then man and nature are absolutely and eternally condemned, that without the operation of grace, man was forever lost. If the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ was *necessary* to save man, then it cannot be possible that any "movement of the will" would be able to make man do well too, otherwise Christ's death is in vain. If grace and salvation can only be given by God, it must follow that man without God is condemned, otherwise God is of no use. The quantum of the savior is *only* as great as the quantum of the suffering it saves from. If Christ merely saves, as Luther says, the "lowest parts of man", then Christ is of just as little worth— Christ must therefore save the whole of man, from which follows that either man is forever lost or Christ is done for. The importance of the savior relative to the suffering Paul grasped only as a means of further pathological agitation for convincing people to the faith— but by taking the words "what is not of faith is sin" and declaring faith to be *fully* Christ and the world to be *fully* sin, the tension grows to an absolute dialectic: either Christ or not Christ, either life, or death— "*Deinde, cum Christus dicatur via, veritas et vita, idque per contentionem, ut quidquid non est Christus, id neque via, sed error; neque veritas, sed mendacium; neque vita, sed mors sit."* There is no other choice: faith does not only bring "blessedness"; it is the *only* path towards life, everything else is death. Christ has

usurped all the rights of life; *extra me nihil.* But once again, the importance of the savior is *only* relative to the suffering that he is saving *from*: "*L'incarnation montre à l'homme la grandeur de sa misère par la grandeur du remède qu'il a fallu.*" And again: *liberum arbitrium non possit velle bonum*— Free will cannot will anything good, which in the moral language that unnaturally links immoral action with suffering means that free will cannot lead to anything but suffering; this is the meaning of the "orginal sin" in *traductio psychologica* — man is eternally condemned, and all his faculties lead him to nothing but suffering. This is the consequence of moral law made psychological law; a total violation of the purposes of moral law and a destruction of the laws of natural causality. It is not only nature which is vilified here: the entirety of reality, every single law of its structure is made an object of villainy, every single aspect of it is rejected, baptized as evil. The consequence of this is that human life, being governed by original sin, cannot be anything but sin, which in moral language means suffering and death— moral language is just rhetorical language, but made into a psychological causality it means that whatever is outside of morality *necessarily* is suffering and death. Therefore, despite the mystery of original sin, it is, to say it in Pascal's words, less mysterious than the problem of man's suffering would be without it. Man's faculties then, cannot will anything but evil, that

is, it cannot lead to anything but suffering and death. The only end here is a total rejection of man's faculties, a total rejection of every single movement of man, a total rejection *of man*— suicide.

XIII

But Luther, of course, did not commit suicide. He instead lived a long and adventurous, exalting, admirable life. Even at the moment of his death we get the calm assurance that he did not regret his life, that he was thoroughly satisfied with it. What happened? Of course, Luther did not follow through with this logic to the end, at the very moment of absolute despair he finally came up with what he needed: *sola fide, servum arbitrium.* With this he was able to escape that terrible tension which he found himself in and arrive at the point which his heart had been secretly seeking with all fervor: rest. If the will is not free, as Luther so assures us, "faith" cannot be anything active, no crying after God to bend the laws of nature for you as Shestov would have it, for that would entail struggle, and here there can *be* no struggle at all— *"sola fide"* comes to mean "*solum nihil"*— if faith is not active it is inactive, at which point it is nothing. *"Sola fide"* becomes an empty phrase under which the instincts can finally, freely, hide behind and do whatever they wish. But this is exactly what Luther needed, and in that sense we can call Luther the first great atheist of the modern West. If

"works" are nothing then man cannot actively struggle with God, actively engage with God— God as a thing is done away with; when Kant was termed *"the all-destroyer"* he was merely finishing what Luther had begun. Thus, Luther, not without a smile, seems to peak at us from the end of his *Servo Arbitrio*, with the calm and stable conscience he had so been seeking, now *found*. What he had done away with, that *liberum arbitrium*, was not that "monster" which drew man away from God, but in reality that terrible responsibility precisely to be drawn to a God that is not there, to please, and torture yourself for, Nothingness. "*Si igitur Scriptura (inquis) dilucida est, cur in hac re tot saeculis viri excellentes ingenio excutiant? Respondeo: caecutierunt sic, in laudem et gloriam liberi arbitrii."* That is, men have been so caught up in justifying themselves by their free choice that they did not notice they were already justified— "sola fide" means *not* "faith" as a positive power or an organ of salvation, which would entail the exercise of free will, but the rejection of uselessly tormenting one's self at attempting to justify one's self before the moral authority. If man is already justified by the death of Christ, and man cannot do anything to alter his condition in relation to sin, the categories of faith and sin are done away with in any meaningful way, they are transferred to and forgotten in the realm of the *Ding an Sich*. Luther reminds us that God is necessity, that necessity which

Shestov so fought against while *praising* Luther— how could this be? Is not necessity terrible and cruel? Ultimately, both men bowed down before necessity, only Luther was far more *honest* about it, while Shestov kept on speaking about the "kingdom of God" gained "through violence"— both men wanted rest, and the absolution of moral responsibility, cloaked in different rhetorical means, was achieved thereby.

XIV

Pascal, however, was not as lucky as Luther. Christianity was born out of weariness and sickness, and it finds its most fertile ground in the exploitation of further sickness. Pascal was one of those generational individual men whom, by unluckiest chance, sickness is stronger than in most of mankind. Leaving the physical ailments of the poor Pascal, who was undeniably crushed by them, the final blow which struck the mathematician was that of self-negation. "*Il faut n'aimer que Dieu et ne haïr que soi."* Again, the instincts which are mingled with the great men are multiplied relative to the intensity of their instincts; sickness is made more sick within them; they cannot *afford* sickness. The rot of plebeian weariness was absorbed into Pascal, and he experienced it a thousand times stronger than other men. In this sickness, he saw that all of life cannot be but sin, suffering and death; that all human faculties

were corrupt, that he had ruined himself by his reason, which was inherently corrupt. Pascal saw through the conclusion of the Christian doctrine to the very end: in man there is only suffering, sickness and death, and in the use of his faculties there is nothing but the further usage of the fruit of sin— everything in it belongs to the *Regnum Satanae* of Luther. Reason, the faculties of man, and the exercise of the faculties of man, that is, the faculties of life itself— *life itself* was seen as nothing but temptation, the tool of the devil, which could necessarily not lead to anything but suffering. This is the conclusion out of that dialectic "God and Satan": if the causes of man's sufferings are not to be traced back to life itself their causes are instead to be found in a magical realm *outside* of life, that of "God and Satan". With this, the affective causes of suffering within life itself are denied, and thus their actual cure are denied with them. The dialectic "God and Satan" makes itself blind to all reality, all actual possibility of life— whatever is suffering and death is sin, is of Satan; whatever is salvation is of faith, of God. Of course, even behind this dialectic the instincts of life can still quietly do their work— but once a point of sickness has been reached where even one's most basic natural instincts have been lost, when life itself has been lost— what then? Where is there left to go then? Instead of seeking itself back to the actual causal and instinctual material of reality, the

instincts are totally re-directed to a realm of imagination, of imaginary causes, and tries to extend itself, by an organ which does not exist (called "faith") into a realm which does not exist (called "God")— it gives itself away to a nothingness which will magically cure; its actual faculties, causes, instincts, *possibilities* of overcoming *denied*, labeled as "temptation", labeled as the cause of the suffering (Satan), when there, in reality, was the possibility of actual re-direction, of cure… Then, the suicidal instinct finally makes its unmistakable appearance: if "reason" is Satan, and "reason" is a part of life, then *"Go away Satan! The Scriptures say: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him."* Means: "Go away Life!" Then, etiology has finally triumphed; then, the psychology of salvation is finally victorious.

XV

What happened to Luther, as what happened to Pascal, happened and continues to happen to several people in every century. — Granted, these people are few, but with every generation in which the strong racial types are intermingled with sickness, in which the cancer of the ideas of pity and destruction continue to grow, it is not impossible that the instrument of torture of salvation continues to grow in strength with each passing generation. To speak quite frankly, the human type which we have today has the ground for

possibly being the human being which suffers the heaviest affective burden in all of human history— the man of today may be a man who has suffered like no-one has before. If we are to take the testimony of books, it is possible that Nietzsche and Pascal were the two to suffer the heaviest burden throughout human life. It cannot be made overly clear just in which way these suffering types are bred: suffering is multiplied by greatness of character; the greater a human type, the more will the bits of sickness intermingled within him be multiplied. The great man is necessarily sick. Not in vain was it said that Saint John of The Cross and Teresa de Ávila thought themselves to be *the lowest of men*. The cancer of human pity, the praise of sickness, the admiration of subjugation— in short, the instincts of "the people", must be completely done away with by those higher men for themselves, if they are to survive. To say it once again, the men of strong character, of intense drives, cannot *afford* sickness— they require an almost superhuman strength to hold themselves together, and if this be denied them, if instincts foreign and harmful to their nature intermingle with them, they will not find the consoling rest of the people, but their own destruction. "Men" are further from "mankind" than the latter is from other animal species— let us be absolutely certain on this point. Today, especially, where men are born more and more sick, the intensity

of the struggle I am putting forward cannot reach anything but absolute eschatological tensions, a suffering which will afflict higher men and higher men specifically, the likes of which the world has perhaps not yet seen. The quanta we have been gathering, and expressly bred for a long time now, is clear: The highest types and the lowest types will be born together in one man, the poison will be carried with its multiplier, which is also its cure. The sickest of men will be the healthiest of men, the paradox which breeds the most intense suffering on earth will not hide itself. But what am I saying? What is there left to do? The annihilation of all pity. *Was fällt, das soll man auch noch stoßen*— und Amen!